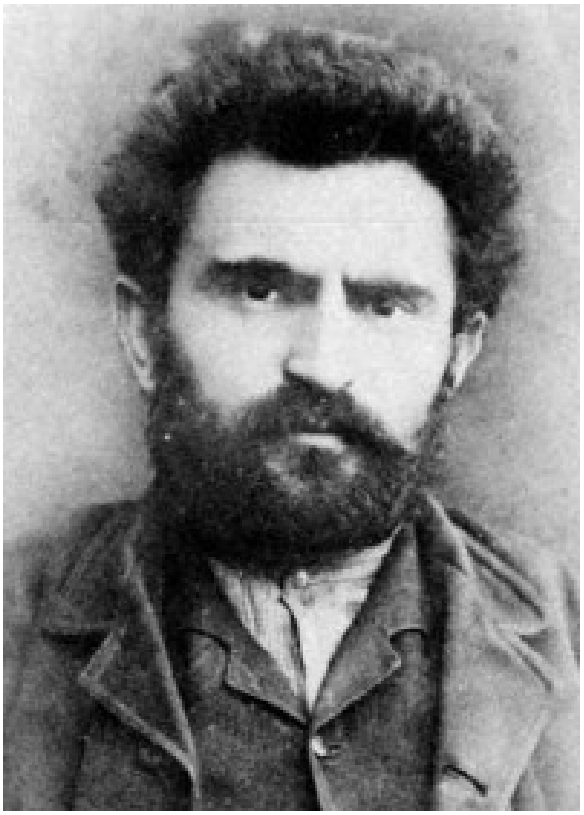
Malatesta



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A Talk About Anarchist Communism Between Two Workers

Errico Malatesta

William. Ah Jack, is that you? I'm glad to meet you. I've been wanting a talk with you for a long time. Oh, Jack! Jack! What have I heard about you! When you lived in the country you were a good lad, quite an example to the young fellows of your age—If your poor father were alive—

Jack. William, why are you speaking to me like this? What have I done that you reproach me? And why would my poor father have been dissatisfied with me?

William. Don't be offended at my words, Jack. I am an old man and I speak for your good. And besides I was such friends with old Andrew, your father, that I am as vexed to see you go astray as though you were my own son, especially when I think of the hopes your father had of you and the sacrifices he made to leave you a good name.

Jack. But William, what are you talking about? Am I not an honest working man? I've never done any harm to any one, and excuse me if I say that I've always done as much good as I could; so why should my father have been ashamed of me? I do my best to learn and improve, and my mater and I are trying to hit upon a remedy for the evils which afflict us all; how then have I deserved that you should pitch in it me like this?

William. Ah, that is just it! I know well enough that you work and help your neighbors. You're a good sort of chap; everybody in the countryside says that of you. But it is none the less true that you have been in prison several times, and people say that you are watched by the police, and that even to be seen with you is enough to get one into trouble. I'm maybe making things awkward for myself this very moment. But I wish you well, and I will speak to you all the same. Jack, listen to the advice of an old man; believe me you had best leave politics to the gentlemen who have nothing to do, and only trouble yourself about working and

doing what is right. That is the way to live peaceably and happily; if you don't you will be lost, body and soul. Listen to me and give up your bad company; for it is that, as everyone knows, that leads poor lads astray.

Jack. Believe me, William, my companions are first-rate fellows; the bread they eat is watered with their sweat ad sometimes with their tears. Leave the masters to speak ill of them; men who would like to suck the last drop of our blood, and then treat us as black-guards and jail-birds if we try to better ourselves and escape from their tyranny. My companions and I have been imprison, it is true, but it was for a good cause; we shall go again, and perhaps something worse may befall us, but it will be for the good of all, and e cause we wish to destroy injustice and misery. You who have toiled all your life and suffered like us from hunger—you who perhaps will have to go into a workhouse to die when you can toil no longer—you, at least, ought not to put yourself on the side of the gentlefolks and the government and fall upon those who try to improve the lot of the poor.

William. My dear boy, I know that the world goes on very badly, but to try to change it is like trying to straighten the legs of a bandy-legged dog. So let us take things as they are, and pray God that at least we may never be in want of a crust of bread. There have always been rich and poor, and we, who are born to labor, ought to work and be contented with what God sends us, otherwise we disturb the public peace and injure our own character.

Jack. Our character! Look at these gentlefolks, as you call them. First of all, they take everything from us, and make us toil like beast of burden to earn a crust of bread, whilst they are living luxuriously and idly on the sweat of our brow, and then, if we don't submit cheerfully to see them growing fat at our expense, the say we are a bad, dishonest lot, the policeman comes and drags us to prison and the clergyman sends us to hell. I tell you what, William, the real rascals and bad characters are those who live by oppression, those who have taken possession of everything under the sun and have ground down the workers until they are like a flock of sheep, quietly allowing themselves to be shorn and slaughtered. And you, you have never sucked the life-blood out of your fellow-men, do you take the part of people who do such things, do you turn upon us? Isn't it enough for them to have the Government to back them up? Government is made by the rich for the benefit of the rich and is bound to be on their side, but must the workers, our own brothers turn against us just because we want them to have bread and freedom? Ah! If it weren't that I remember all the long ages of misery and servitude and degraded habits the poor have suffered, I should say that the worst people of all, those who have the least of the dignity of man, are the poor

who let themselves be made the tools of the oppressors of humanity. As for us, at least we are risking the bit of bread and shred of liberty we have that we may bring about a state of things in which all may be happy.

William. Well, all sounds very fine; but you know, my lad, that without the fear of God no good thing is possible and we must all submit to His will.

Jack. Now, William, if we are going to talk reasonable, do let us leave God out of the question, because the name of God is used as a pretext and justification by all those that are trying to deceive and oppress their fellow men. Kings pretend that God has given them the right to reign, and when two kings dispute about the crown of a country, they both pretend to hold their commissions from God. Nevertheless God gives the victory to him who has most soldiers or the best arms. The proprietor, the exploiter, the monopolist, all speak of God. The Catholic priest, the Protestant, the Jewish, the Turkish, all alike cal themselves the representative of God, and it is in the name of God that they make war upon one another and try to bring grist each one to his own mill. They all seem to think that God has given everything to them and condemned us all to misery and grinding toil. They are to have Paradise in this world and the next too; but we are to have Hell in this life, and only to have Paradise in the next if here we are obedient slaves. Now is you come and tell me that and God has really willed and desired such and arrangements this, I can only say that he is a very wicked one. Lest every one believe as he thinks right, but when we are discussing the state of things in this world, let us stick to what we know something about and see if it isn't possible to get a little happiness in this life for ourselves and our fellowmen; for you know that the parson himself says that all men are God's children and therefore brothers.

William. 'Pon my word, young man, since you've been to the town and take to reading and writing, you've got a way of speaking that would puzzle a lawyer. But now tell me, is it really true, as they say, that you want to steal all the property of ay one who has got any?

Jack. Good! Now at last we've come to the point. No, that is not true, we don't want to steal anything whatever. What we do wish is that the People should take the property of the rich and make it common, for the benefit to all. That would not be stealing, the People would simply be taking again what is their own.

William. What! Do you mean to say that the gentlefolks' property is ours?

Jack. Certainly; it is our property; it is everybody's property. Who gave it to the rich people? How have they earned it? What right had they to seize upon it and what right have they to keep it?

William. But their ancestors have left it to them.

Jack. And who gave it to their ancestors? Look here now; the strongest and the luckiest took advantage of their strength or their luck to take possession of everything and so forced the others to work for them; and not satisfied with living in idleness themselves, oppressing and starving the greater part of their contemporaries, they must needs leave their sons and grandsons the fortune they have usurped, thus condemning future generations to be the slaves of their descendants; though now these descendants have become so enfeebled by indolence and the long exercise of power, that they could never do to-day what their forefathers did long ago. Does all this seem to you just?

William. Well, no; not if they got their wealth by force. But the gentlefolks say that they got their wealth from labour, and it does not seem fair to me to take away from any man what he has worked for.

Jack. Always the same old story! People who do not work and never have worked, are for ever speaking in the name of labour! But tell me; Who produced the earth, metals, coal, stone and so forth, by his labour? Or how did these things come to exist? Isn't it a fact that we all find them when we come into the world, that therefore we all ought to be able to make use of them? What would you say if the rich people thought fir to take possession of the air for their own use, and only to give us a little, and that the most impure, making us pay them for the use of it with our toil? Now the only difference between the earth and the air is that they have been able to lay hold of and divide the earth, while they could not do this with the air, but believe me that, if the thing were possible, they would deal with the air just as they do with the land.

William. True; that's right enough. The land and al the things that nobody has made ought to belong to all. But there are things that have not come of themselves.

Jack. Certainly, there are things that are made by man's work and the land itself would be worth very little if it were not cleared by the hand of man. But in common fairness these things should belong to those who produce them. By what miracle doe sit happen that they are in the possession of exactly those people who are doing another and have never done anything?

William. But the gentlefolks state that their fathers have worked and made savings.

Jack. And they ought to say, on the contrary, that their fathers have made other work without paying them, just as is done to-day. History teaches us that the lot of the worker has continually been wretched and that he who has honestly laboured without taking advantage of his neighbor has never been able to lay by any considerable savings. Gener-

ally he has not been able to get enough to keep him from need. Look at what is going on before you eyes. Does not all that the workers produce go into the hands of the masters? A man spends a few pounds on an uncultivated bit of marshy ground, puts some men there to work and gives them scarcely enough to live on, whilst he stays quietly in town and does nothing. A few years after, this bit of waste land is a garden, with a hundred times its original value. The sons of the proprietor will inherit this fortune and say they are enjoying the fruits of their father's labour; whilst the sons of the men who really toiled and suffered there will continue to toil and suffer. That to you think of that?

William. But if, as you say, the world really has always been thus, there is nothing to be done and the employers cannot help it.

Jack. Well, I am ready to admit everything in favour of the gentry. Let us suppose that the holders of property are all sons of people who have worked and made savings and he the workers are all sons of idle spendthrifts. This is obviously ridiculous, you understand; but even if things actually were so, would there be any justice at all in the present social organization? If you work and I am a lazy dog, it is right enough I should be punished for my laziness; but this is no reason that my sons, who may be honest working men, should be worked to death and famished to keep your sons in idleness and plenty.

William. All that is very fine, and I don't say to the contrary, but then the gentlefolks have got the property, and, when all's said and done, we must be grateful to them, because if it weren't for them people could not get a living.

Jack. If they have the wealth it is because they have taken it by force and have increased it by pocketing the fruit of other people's labour. But they may chance to lose it the same way as it was gained. Until now men have been fighting with one another; they have been trying to snatch the bread out of one another's mouths, and each has esteemed himself happy if he could subjugate his fellow and use him for a beast of burden. But it is time this state of things was put an end to. We gain nothing by fighting with one another; the only harvest we have reaped is poverty, slavery, crime, prostitution, and now and again, those blood-lettings called wars and revolutions. If instead we could come to a mutual agreement, love and aid each other, we should see no more of these evils; there would no longer be some people with a great deal and other with nothing at all, and we should all be trying to make every one as well off as possible. Of course I know that the rich, who are accustomed to rule and to live without working, will not hear of a change of system. We shall act accordingly. If they come to understand that there ought no longer to be hate and inequality between men, and that all ought to work, so

much the better; if, on the contrary, they claim a right to continue to enjoy the fruits of their own and their fathers' violence and robbery, so much the worse for them: they have taken what they possess by force, and by force we shall take it from them. If the poor know how to come to an understanding, they are stringer than the rich.

William. But when there are no more gentlefolks how shall we manage to live? Who will give us work?

Jack. What a question! Why you see what happens every day; that it is you who dig, plough, sow, reap, you who thresh the corn, who feed the beasts, who make the better ad cheese, and yet you ask me how we shall live without the gentlefollks? Ask me rather how the gentry would manage to live without us, poor fools of working men in town and country, who slave to clothe and feed them. A moment ago you wanted us to be grateful to the employers because they enable us to live. Don't you understand that it is they who are living on your work and that every bit of bread they eat is taken from your children, every fine present they make their wives means the poverty, hunger, cold, even perhaps the prostitution of yours? What so these gentlefolks produce? Nothing. Therefore what they consume is taken from the workers. Suppose all agricultural labourers disappeared to-morrow; there would be no one to till the ground and every one would be starved. If the shoemakers disappeared, there would be no more shoes; if the masons vanished, there would be no one to build houses, and so forth. If each class of workers failed, one after anther, with each a branch of production would disappear and men have to do without some useful or necessary things. But what harm would it do us to be rid of the gentry! It would be like the disappearance of the locusts.

William. Yes, it really is we who produce everything; but how could I, for instance, grow corn if I had neither land nor beasts nor seed? I am sure there is nothing for us but to be dependent upon the employers.

Jack. Come now, William, do we understand one another or not? I have told you already what we must take from the masters what is needful to enable us to work and live, land, tools, seed and all. I know very well that as long as the land and instruments of labour belong to the masters, the workers must always be in subjection and will reap naught but slavery and poverty. This is just why the very first thing to do is to take away property from the middle-class; without that the world will never mend.

William. You are right, you did say so. But all this is so new that I get quite lost. Now explain a bit how you would do. What would be done with this property taken from the rich? It would be divided, I suppose?

Jack. No, no, nothing of the sort. If you hear any one say that we want to divide up property and take the place of those who have it now, you

may rely upon it that he does not know what he is talking about or is a scoundrel.

William. Well then, I don't understand in the least.

Jack. And yet it is plain enough; we simply wish to put everything in common. We start with the principle that every one ought to work and every one ought to be as well off as possible. A man can't live in this world without work; if he does not work himself he must live upon the labour of others, which is unjust and hurtful. But of course you must understand that hen I say that all must work, I mean all those who can do; cripples, invalids, and old people ought to be supported by society, because human feeling forbids us to let any one suffer; and besides we all grow old, and we are all liable to become crippled or sickly at any time, and so may those who are dear to us. Now if you think it over carefully, you will see that all wealth, that is to say all things which are useful to man, can be divided into two sorts. One, which includes land, machinery and all instruments of labour, iron, wood, stone, the means of transport, etc., etc., is absolutely necessary to enable us to work and ought to be put in common for every one to work with. As to the method of working, we shall see about that later. I believe it would be best to work in common, because in that way one produces more with less fatigue, and, in many trades, if each person had to work separately, we should have to give up using machines which greatly simplify and diminish the labour of man. Besides, when human beings have no need to snatch the bread out of one another's mouths, they will not be like cats and dogs, but will take pleasure inbeing together. Certainly those who choose to work alone will be left to do so, the essential thing s that no one should live without working, thus compelling others to work for him; but of course that would not be likely to happen where each had a right to eh material for work and would certainly not choose to make himself the servant of another. The other sort of wealth includes the things which directly serve the needs of man, like food, clothes, houses. I think these ought to be put in common and distributed in such a way that people can get on until the new harvest and until industry has supplied some new produce. As for the things that will be produced after the Revolution, when there will be no lazy employers living on the toil of famishing proletarians, the workers of each country will share them as they choose. If they are willing to work in common and to put everything in common, that will be best; in that case they will try to regulate production in such a way as to satisfy the needs of all, and consumption in such a way as to secure the greatest well-being to every one. If they do not proceed in this way, they must calculate what each produces so that each may take an amount of thing equivalent to what he has produced. This calculation is rather dif-

ficult, I think myself it is almost impossible; so the result will probably be that when they see the difficulties of proportionate distribution, they will be more inclined to accept the idea of putting everything in common. But any way, things of the first necessity, like bread, dwellings, water and suchlike, must be secured to every one, regardless of the amount of work he may do. Whatever organization is adopted, inheritance should exist no longer, for it is not just that one should be born to wealth and another to hunger an toil. Even if we admit that each is absolute master of what he produces and may make savings on his own account, those savings ought to return to the community at his death. Children ought to be brought up and educated at the cost of all and in such a fashion as to procure them the greatest development and best attainable teaching. Without that, there can be neither justice nor equality, the principle of the right of each to the instruments of labour will be violated, for it does not suffice to give men land and machinery if they are not also put in a condition to make the best possible use of them. I do not say anything specially about women, because we think women should be the equals of men and when we speak of "men" we mean human beings without distinction of sex.

William. There is jus tone thing: to take the fortune of rich men who have robbed and starved the poor is all very well; but if a man by hard work and saving has put by something to buy a little field, or open a little shop, what right have you to take from him what is really the fruit of his labour?

Jack. That is not an over common case in these days when capitalists and governments make a clean sweep of so much of the produce; but any way, I have told you that each person has a right to ray material and the instruments of labour and, for that reason, if a man has a bit of ground which he cultivates with his own hands, he might just as well keep it and he would be given besides all the best tools and manures and everything else he required to make it produce as much as possible. Certainly it would be the best plan to put everything in common; but there will be no need to force people to do so because a like interest will urge all to adopt a communist system. Things will go better with common property and work, and very likely there may be more, which it is more convenient to use in common.

William. Machinery! The machines are what we ought to burn! It is the machines that break our arms and take away our bread. Here, in the country, as sure as a machine comes, we can reckon on our wages going down and some of us losing our work and having to go somewhere else. It must be worse in the towns. If there were no machines the gentlefolks would want our labour more and so we should live a bit better.

Jack. You're right, William, to think the machines one cause of poverty and loss of work; but that happens because they belong to the rich. If they belonged to the workers, it would be just the other way; they would be the principle cause of human comfort. For after all, machines only work in our place and faster than we do. Thanks to machinery man will not be obliged to toil for long hours to satisfy his needs, will not be condemned to painful exertion exceeding his physical strength. This is why, is machinery were applied to all branches of production and belonged to every one, a few hours of light and easy work would suffice for all the needs of consumption and each worker would have time to gain knowledge, to keep up friendly relations, in a word, to live and enjoy life, profiting by all the conquests of science and civilization. Remember, that what we have to do is to take possession of the machines, not destroy them. You may be sure the owners will do just as much to defend their machines against whose who want to destroy as against those who try to take possession of them; therefore, as there will be the same effort to make and the same risk to run in either case, it will be a downright folly to break rather than take the machines. Would you destroy corn and hoses if they could be shared by all? Surely not! Well, we must do the same with the machines; for if in the hands of employers they are instrumental to our poverty and servitude, in our hands they will become instrumental to wealth and freedom.

William. But if things are to go well under such a system, every body must be willing to work.

Jack. Of course.

William. And suppose there are some folks that would like to live without working? Toil is a hardship, even dogs don't like it.

Jack. You confuse society as it is to-day with society as it will be after the Revolution. You say that even dogs don't enjoy toil; but could you spend whole days doing nothing?

William. I? No, because I'm accustomed to work. When I've nothing to do my hands seem to itch to be after something; but there are folks who would stay all day long at the public house playing cards or lounge about with their hands in their pockets.

Jack. Now-a-days, but not after the Revolution, and I will tell you why. Now-a-days work is disagreeable, ill-paid and looked down upon. Now-a-days the workingman just fag himself nearly to death or be half starved, and he is treated like a beast of burden. The working man has no hope; he knows that ten to one he will end his days in the workhouse. He can't attend to his family as he ought ad he has scarcely any enjoyment in his life, while he continually suffers ill-treatment and humiliation. On the other hand, the man who does not work takes his ease in every

possible way; he is looked up to and esteemed; all men and all pleasures are at his service. Even amongst working men, those who do least and whose work is the least disagreeable earn most and are thought more of than the others. Is it to be wondered at that folks are disgusted with work and are eager to seize an opportunity to do nothing? But when work is done under conditions fir for human beings, for a reasonable time and according to the laws of health; when the worker knows that he is working for the well-being of his family and of all men; when every one who wishes to be respected must necessarily be a worker and the lazy are as much despised as are spies and procuresses to-day; who will then wish to forego the joy of knowing himself useful and beloved, that he may live in an idleness disastrous alike to his body and his mind? Even now-a-days, everybody, apart some rare exceptions, instinctively loathes the idea of being a spy or a procuress. And yet by these vile callings more can be gained than by digging the ground; there is little or no work and more or less State protection. But as these trades are reckoned abominable, nearly every one prefers poverty to the infamy of following them. There are exceptions, there are weak, degraded creatures who prefer infamy, but this is because their choice lies between infamy and poverty. But who would choose an infamous and contemptible life when by working he could secure comfort and public esteem? Certainly such a man would be mad. And there is no doubt that this public reprobation of idleness would arise and make itself felt, for work is essentially needful to society. Idle folks would not only hard everyone by living on what others produces without contributing their own work to supply the wants of the community, but also break the harmony of the new order of things and become the elements of a discontented party, who might desire a return to the past. Collective bodies are like individuals; they love and admire what is or what they think or use, and hate and despise what they know or believe to be hurtful. They may be deceived and too often they are; but in the case before us no mistake is possible, for it is clear as daylight that the person who does not work, eats and drinks at the expense of others and is wronging everybody. Why, suppose you join a party of men to do some work all together and share and share alike in the produce; of course you will be considerate to any of your mates who may be weak or unskilled, but as for a mere shirker will he not be led such a life that he will take himself off or else feel inclined to set his shoulder to the wheel? That is just what will happen in the community at large is the laziness of some of its members threatens to become a serious danger. If we could not go ahead because of those who would not work, which to me seems very unlikely, the remedy would, after all, not be far to seek; they would simply be turned out of the community.

Then, as they would have a right to nothing but ray material and the instruments of labour, they would be forced to work if they wished to live.

William. You are beginning to convince me; but tell me, will everybody have to work in the fields?

Jack. Why should they? Men do not need only bread and beer and meat. We want houses, and clothes and book s and all the things that workers of allsorts of trades produce and no one can by himself supply all his own needs. Even to till the soil, do we not want the help of the blacksmith and the implement maker for our tools, and consequently of the miner who unearths the iron, the mason who builds houses and shops and so firth. It does not follow, therefore, tat all must till the ground, only that all must do some useful work. Besides the variety of trades will allow each person to choose what suits hum best, and thus, as far as possible, work will be nothing more than exercise, and an ardently desired enjoyment.

William. Then every one will be free to choose any trade he likes?

Jack. Of course. Only we must be careful that some trades are not overstocked, whilst others want hands. As we shall be working for the public interest, we must arrange so that everything really necessary is produced whilst individual preferences are consulted. But you will see that will come right when we have no masters to force us to toil for a crust of bread, without knowing what is the object or use of our work.

William. You say it will all come right, but I don't see it. I think that no one will do disagreeable work; they will all be lawyers and doctors. Who will work in the fields? Who will risk his life and health in a mine? Who will go down into the black man-holes of the sewers or clean our cesspools?

Jack. Oh, you may leave out the lawyers. Lawyers and priests are a sort of gangrene in society that the revolution will cure. Let us talk about useful work and not about occupations carried on at the expense of one's neighbours; otherwise we might count the burglar as a worker; he often has plenty of exertion. Now-a-days we prefer one trade to another not because it is more or less in accordance with our tastes and faculties, but because it is easier to learn, because we earn, or hope to earn, more by it, or because we think we shall run the best chance of employment in that line; it is only in the second place that we consider if such and such work is more disagreeable than another sort. In fine, the choice of a trade is mostly imposed upon us by our birth, by chance and by social prejudice. The work of an agricultural labourer, for instance, would not please even the poorest townsman. And yet there is nothing repulsive in agriculture in itself, and like in the fields is not without its pleasures. Very much the contrary; if you read the poets you will see that they are enthusias-

tic about country life. But the truth is that the poets who write books have very seldom tilled the soil, whilst the farm labourers are work out with work and half starved, live worse than the beasts and are treated as nobodies, until the poorest wretch in a town would hardly change places with them. How can you expect people to like to be agricultural labourers? Even we who were born in the country, leave it as soon as we can, because whatever we do, we are better off and thought more of elsewhere. But how many of us would wish to leave the country, if we were working there on our own account and could find comfort, freedom and respect in our work? It is just the same in all trades, because as things are now, the harder and the more necessary any work is, the worse it is paid, the more it is despised and the more inhuman are the conditions under which it must be done. Go, for example, into a goldsmith's shop and you will find that, in comparison with the wretched holes we live in, the place is clean, well ventilated and warmed, that the working hours are not very long and that though the men are ill paid, for the employer takes the best part of what they produce, still they are well off compared to other workers; they can amuse themselves in the evening; when they take off their working jackets, they can go where they like, with no fear of being stared or sneered at. But if you go into a cutler's workshop, you will see poor fellows knife-grinding there for a miserable wage, in a poisonous atmosphere, which will destroy their lives in a few years, and if, after their work, they take the liberty of going where gentlemen are, they will be lucky if they are not made to feel themselves ridiculous. It will not be surprising if, under such circumstances, a man prefers gold working to cutlery. To say nothing of the workers who use no tool but a pen. Just think; a man who only writes bad newspaper articles earns ten time more than a farm labourer and is thought of much more highly. When journalists, engineers, doctors, artists, professors, are in work and know their business well, they live in comfort; but compositors, bricklayers, shoemakers, all sots of handworkers, and some poor teachers and other brain-workers too, are halfstarved, whilst they are worked to death. I don't mean to imply that the only way of conquering Nature, becoming civilized, gaining greater freedom and well-being; doctors, engineers, chemists, teachers, are as useful in modern society as farm-labourers and other handworkers. I only mean to say that all useful work should be equally appreciated and so arranged that the worker may find equal satisfaction in doing it; and also that intellectually work, being a great pleasure in itself, and giving the man who doe it a great superiority over those who remain in ignorance, should be put within the reach of every one and not remain the privilege of a few.

William. But if, as you yourself say, intellectual work is a great pleasure and gives those who do it an advantage over others who are ignorant, surely every one would want to study; I should as much as any body. And then who is to do the manual work?

Jack. Every one; because whilst studying literature and science they should also do physical work; every one should work with both head and hands. These two sorts of work, so far from interfering with one another, are supplementary; for a healthy man needs to exercise all his organs, his brains as well as his muscles. He whose intelligence is developed and who is accustomed to think does best at manual work, and he who is sound and healthy, as people are who exercise their limbs under healthy conditions, has his mind in a more wide-awake and penetrating state. Besides, as both kinds of work are necessary and as one is pleasanter than the other and has enabled man to attain to the dignity of self-consciousness, it is not just that a part of mankind should be condemned to the stupefying effects of exclusively manual toil, that the privilege of science, which means power, may be left to a few. Therefore, I say again, every body should work at once physically and intellectually.

William. I can understand that; but there is manual work which is hard and manual work which is easy, some is ugly, some is beautiful. Now who would be a miner, for instance, or a scavenger?

Jack. My dear William, if you only knew what inventions and researches are being made every day, you would see that even now, if the organization of work did not depend upon people who are not working themselves and consequently don't trouble about the comfort of the workers, all manual labor could be carried on under conditions which would prevent it from being repulsive, unhealthy and toilsome. Therefore there is no reason why any work should not be done by workers who have chosen it voluntarily. And if this would be possible to-day, just fancy what might happen when, everybody having to work, the studies and efforts of all would be directed towards making work less burdensome and more pleasant. And if after all there wee still some crafts harder than others, it could be arranged to make up for these inequalities by some special advantages. Besides, when men are working in common, for the common benefit, we see arising amongst them that same spirit of brotherliness and compliance which belongs to family life in its best aspect; so that each, far from seeking only to save himself trouble, tries rather to take the heaviest work for his own share.

William. Right enough, if all this happens; but suppose it doesn't?

Jack. Well, if in spite of all this, there still remains some needful work which no one will do by choice, then we shall every one of us have to

take a hand at it, each doing a little, working at it, for example, one day a month, one week a yea, or something like that. But set your mind at rest. If a thing is needful for every one, means will certainly be found to do it.

William. Do you know, you are beginning to talk me over! Yet there's one thing I can't rightly see my way to. It's a big job that taking away property from the gentry. I don't know, but—isn't there anything else you could do?

Jack. How would you manage? Whilst it remains in the hands of the rich they will be cocks o' the walk and will follow up their own interests without troubling about ours, as they have done since the beginning of time. But why don't you want to take away property from the gentlefolk? Perhaps you fancy that it would be unfair, and a wrong thing to do?

William. No, no; after what you have told me it seems to me that it would be very right, as in tearing away form them, we are snatching from them also our won bodies on which they are feeding. And besides we are not taking their fortune for ourselves, but to put it in common to do good to every one, aren't we?

Jack. Most assuredly. And if you look close at the matter, you will see that the gentry themselves will also be the gainers. They will have to give up ordering others about, putting on airs and graces, and idling; they will have to set to work, but when work is done with the help of the workers, it will become nothing but a useful, pleasant exercise. Do not the gentry now-a-days go hunting? Do they not ride on horseback, practice gymnastics and take exercise in other ways which prove that muscular exertion is a necessity and a pleasure to healthy, well-fed men? For them then it is merely a question of putting into production the physical energy they now put forth purely as an amusement. And then how much advantage they will reap from the general well-being! Look, for example, at what we see before our eyes. A few gentlefolks are wealthy and can play the lord in their own houses, but for them as for us the streets are hideous and filthy, and the bad air which rises from our hovels and slums makes them ill as well as us; with their private fortunes they can't improve the whole country, a thing which could be done easily if every one set about it. Our poverty is a continual blight upon their lives, acting upon them indirectly in a million ways, without counting their dread of a violent revolution. You see then that we shall be only doing good to the gentlefolk by taking their wealth. Though they certainly don't understand this, and never will, because they like to give orders and they fancy that the poor are fashioned of a different clay from themselves. But what matter? If they will not come to terms with us, so much the worse for them, we shall know how to force them to do so.

William. That is all fair enough; but can't things be done bit by bit, by mutual agreement? Property might be left to those who possess it, but on condition that they would increase wages, and treat us like human beings. Then, gradually, we might lay by something, and we too might buy a bit of land, and, at last, when we were all property owners, we would put everything in common, as you say. There was a chap I heard proposing something of the sort.

Jack. Now look here! There is only one way of coming to friendly terms, and that is for the property owners voluntarily to renounce their property. But you know, as well as I do, that it is no good thinking of that. Whilst private property exists, that is whilst the land, instead of belonging to every one, belongs to Peter or Paul, there will always be poverty and things will go from bad to worse. Under private property each is trying all the time to being grist to his own mill. The property owners not only try to give the workers as little as they can, but they are always fighting amongst themselves. Generally speaking each tries to sell his produce for as much as he can, and each buyer, on his side, tries to pay as little as possible. And then what happens? The land owners, manufacturers, and large merchants, who can manufacture and sell wholesale, provide themselves with machinery, take advantage of all favourable states of the market, wait until the right moment to sell or even sell at a loss for a time, end by ruining the small proprietors and dealers, who sink into poverty and are obliged, they and their children, to go and work for a daily wage. Thus (it s a thing we see every day) men who work on their own account alone or with a few journeymen, are driven, after a bitter struggle, to shit up shop, and go to seek work in big factories, small land-owners who cannot get enough capital for their farming and cannot even pay their tithes and taxes have to sell their fields and houses to the large proprietors, and so on. If a kind-hearted employer really wished to better the condition of his work-people, he could only put himself in a position to be ruined by competition.

On the other hand, the workers are goaded by hunger into competing with one another; and as there are more hands to be had than are needed for the work to be done, they are continually snatching the bread out of each other's mouths. Not that there is not plenty of work that needs doing, but that at any particular time there is only a certain amount which it pays the employer to have done. Thanks to this situation, progress itself becomes a misfortune. A machine is invented: immediately a number of men are thrown out of work; they can earn nothing, therefore cannot consume as before, and thus indirectly effect the breadwinning of other workers. In America wide tracts of land are brought under cultivation and much corn produced: the land-owning, or course without

enquiring if everybody in the United States has plenty to eat, ship their grain over here that they may get more for it. Here the price of corn is lower, but the poor do not reap the advantage, for the European landowners, not able to compete with this cheapness, let the soil go out of cultivation, except some of the most productive portions, and thus a number of agricultural labourers lose their employment. When a man has not even a penny in his pocket cheap bread is no good to him.

William. Ah; now I understand! I've heard say that they would not let the corn come from abroad, and I thought is a rascally thing to try to keep food out of the country; I believed the gentlefolks and the farmers between them wanted to starve the people. But now I see they had their reasons.

Jack. No, no; if the corn did not come it would be very bad from another point of view. Then the landlords and farmers, having no competition to fear from outside, would sell at any price they chose and—

William. Then what is to be done?

Jack. Done? I told you before; everything must be put in common. And then the more produce there is the better it will be.

William. But now tell me: how would it be if an arrangement were made with the owners of property: they to contribute the land and capital and we the work; the produce to be shared between us and them? What do you say to that?

Jack. First of all I say that if you were willing to go shares, ten to one your master would be willing to do nothing of the sort. You would be obliged to use force to bring him to it. But in that case, why do things by halves? Why content yourself with a system which allows injustice and parasitism to continue and presents the increase of production? And further, what right have certain men who do not work to come and take half of what is produced by the workers? Besides, as I have told you, it is not only that half the produce would go to the employers, but that the sum total of produce would be less than it might be, because where you have private property and isolated labour less is produced that by working in common. It is like when you want to move a rock: a hundred men would not succeed by trying singly, whereas by uniting their efforts two or three can raise it easily. If one man wished to make a pin, I don't know if he could get through it in an hour; whereas ten men working into each other's hands can make thousands of pins a day. Economists, many of whom have le themselves be scandalously biased by class prejudice, have often said that property is not the result of the seizure of property by the upper classes, but of the scarcity of natural products, which would, say they, be quite insufficient, if they were distributed to all men. This enables the said economists and their disciples to conclude

that poverty is an inevitable thing, against which no measures can be taken. Don't believe a word of it. Even as things are organized to-day, the produce of the earth and of industry is enough to enable every man to live in comfort; and if it is not more abundant, that is the employer's fault. They thing of nothing but how much they can gain, and even go so far as to destroy articles or let them go to waste merely to keep up the price. Whilst they pretend there is not enough natural wealth, they are leaving large tracts of country uncultivated and numbers of workmen with nothing to do. But, answer a certain school of economists, even when all ground is brought under cultivation and tilled as intelligently as may be, still the productive power of the earth is limited and the increase of population is not. Therefore there must always some a moment when the production of food stuffs will be stationary, whilst population will go on growing indefinitely and with it famine. The sole remedy, they conclude, for social ills is that the poor should have very few children. I'm not very learned about the law of rent but I'm sure this remedy is no cure for our social evils. You have only to look at countries where there is plenty of land and a scanty population; you will see as much or more poverty as where population is dense. We must change our social organization and bring all the land under cultivation, and then, if the population seems growing too fast, we can consider how to check it. But let us go back to the question of produce-sharing between property-owner and workman. It is a system which used to exist in parts of France in field work. It still exists in Tuscany, but it is gradually disappearing because the landowners find day-labour pay them better. Now-a-days, what with machines, scientific culture and foreign produce, the masters are obliged to farm on a large scale and employ hired labourers. If they don't, they are ruined by competition. If they present system goes on, I believe that property will be more and more concentrated in the hands of a few, and the workers reduced to utter wretchedness by machinery and rapid methods of production. We shall have a few big financiers and capitalists masters of the world, a certain number of workmen attending upon the machines, and a number of servants and police to wait on and defend the aforesaid big men. The mass of the people will have to die of hunger or live on charity. The beginnings of such a stat of things may already be seen; small properties are disappearing, the numbers of out-o'-works increases, the gentlefolks, from fear or from pity, busy themselves with soup kitchens and the schemes of General Booth. If the people do not wish to be reduced to beg their bread from rich philanthropists or Local Boards, as they once did at the gates of monasteries, let them lose no time in taking possession of the land and machinery and working on their own account.

William. But how would it do if Government were to make some good laws to force rich people not to make the poor suffer?

Jack. The same old story, William! Isn't the government made up of gentlefolks, and is it likely that they will make laws against themselves? But even supposing the poor could manage to take their turn at governing, would that be a reason for leaving the rich with the means of getting the upper hand again? Rely upon it, wherever there are rich and poor, the poor may make their voices heard for a moment during an outbreak, but the rich will always get hold of the power in the end. This is why we, if we are the stringer for ever so short a time, must at once take property away from the rich, so that they may not have the means of putting things back as they were before.

William. I understand. We must have a real *Republic*, make all men equal, and then the man who works will eat, and the man who does nothing can go with an empty stomach. Ah me! I'm sorry I'm old. You young folks will see a good time.

Jack. Softly, softly, friend! By the word "Republic" you mean the Social Revolution, and for those who understand you that is all very well. But you are expressing yourself badly; for what is commonly understood by a Republic is not at all what you mean. Get it well into your head that republican government is a government like the rest; only instead of a king there is a president and ministers, who really have just the same powers. We see that very plainly across the Channel, and even if the French had the democratic republic promised by their radicals, they wouldn't be any better off. Instead of two Chambers they would have one, the Chamber of Deputies, but wouldn't the people be forced to be soldiers and to work like slaves all the same, in spite of all the fine promises of the gentlemen deputies? Don't you see that as long as there are rich and poor, the rich will have the upper hand? Whether we live under a Republic or a Monarchy the results which spring from private property will always exist. Whilst economic relations are regulated by competition, property will be concentrated in a few hands, machines will take work from working men and the masses will be reduced to misery. Have any of the Republics that exist seriously bettered the condition of the working classes?

William. Well to be sure! And I always believed that Republic meant equity!

Jack. Yes, the republicans say so, and this is how they make it but; "Under a really democratic Republic," say they, "the members of parliament who make the laws are elected by the whole people. Consequently when the people are not contented, they change their M.P.'s for better ones and everything comes right. And as the poor are the great major-

ity, it is practically they who govern." That is what the republicans say, but the reality is something quite different. The very poverty of the poor causes them to be ignorant and superstitious, and they will remain so as long as they are not economically independent and are unconscious of their true interest. You and I who have been lucky enough to earn more than some and to be able to teach ourselves a little, may have intelligence to understand where our interests lie and strength to face the employers' revenge; but the great mass will never be able to do so as long as present conditions last. In a time of Revolution one brave man is worth a score of timid ones and draws along with him numbers who, left to themselves, would never have the energy to revolt. But in front of a ballot-box character and energy go for nothing. Mere numbers are all that tell. And in the present state of things the greatest number will always be for the men who hold their daily bread in their hands and can give or withhold it at their pleasure. Haven't you happened to notice as much? To-day the greater part of the electors are poor, but how often do you see them choosing men of their own class to represent them and defend their interests?

William. No, most of 'em don't like to run the chance of offending the landlord, the parson, or their employer. If they do, they are as like as not to be turned off and even evicted.

Jack. Not a hopeful outlook for the benefits to be expected from universal suffrage, is it? The people will always send middle-class men to parliament, and these will always be contriving how to keep the people as dependent and submissive as possible. Even if we were to have paid members and the poor were to take advantage of this to send working men to represent them, what could they do in so corrupt a medium? The few that have been tried have not cut a very brilliant figure in any country, No! during the next revolution the people must not allow themselves to be hoodwinked as they have so often been by democrats and republicans. Over and over again the people have dropped their arms on being promised a Republic, because they have been taught to believe that it is the best possible form of organization and will work marvels in their condition. Next time they must not rest content with empty words, they must resolutely lay hands upon property.

William. You are right. We have been deceived so often, it is time we opened our eyes. But still there must always be a government, for if there is no one to give orders, how can things go on?

Jack. And why must we be ordered? Why can't we manage our affairs ourselves? He who rules always seeks his own advantage, and, either ignorantly or willfully, betrays the people. Power makes even the best of men giddy with pride. Besides, and this is the principal reason for

not wishing to have an chief, men must cease to be led like a flock. They must grow accustomed to think, and learn to recognize their dignity and strength. If the people are to be educated, and accustomed to freedom and the management of their own affairs, they must be left to act for themselves and feel themselves responsible for their conduct. They may often make mistakes and do wrong, but they will see the consequences for themselves, and understand that they have done amiss and must go on another tack. Another thing. The harm the people may do left to themselves will never be one millionth part of that which is done by the best of governments. If a child is to learn to walk, he must be let walk by himself, and not be afraid of the falls he may have.

William. Yes, but before a child can be set down to walk he must have some strength in his legs; if he has none, he must say in his mother's arms.

Jack. That's true. But governments are not in the least like mothers. It is not they who improve and build up a nation. As a matter of fact, social progress is almost always made in opposition to the government or in spite of it. The most government does is to put what the masses have begun to need and desire into the form of law, and this it spoils with its spirit of domination and monopoly. The peoples are in different stages of advancement; but in no matter what state of civilization, or even of barbarism, a people may be, they could manage their affairs better without the government which has sprung up amongst them. As far as I can see you fancy that the government is composed of the most intelligent and capable men. Nothing of the sort. Generally speaking governments are directly, or be delegation, composed of those who have the most money. And besides, the exercise of power spoils the finest spirits. Put those who have hitherto been the best of men into the government and see what happens. They no longer understand the needs of the people, they are obliged to busy themselves with the interests created by politics, they are corrupted by the absence of the emulation and criticism of their social equals, and they are diverted from the sphere of action in which they were really competent, to make laws about things they have not even heard of before. Finally, they end by believing themselves a superiour order of beings, and form a caste which takes no heed of the people except to check and baffle them. Better, far better, for us to manage our own affairs, by putting ourselves in agreement with the workers of other trades and other parts of the country; and not only with those of England and Europe, but of the whole world; for all men are brethren and have an interest in aiding one another. Don't you think so?

William. Yes, you are right. But what about the wicked? What is to be done with thieves and robbers?

Jack. To begin with, when there is no more property and ignorance we shan't be troubled with many of that sort. But even supposing there were some left, is that a reason to have a government and police? Can't we ourselves bring them to reason? Not by ill-treating them, as both innocent and guilty are ill-used today, but by putting them in conditions where they can't do any harm, and doing everything in our power to set them on the right road again.

William. So when we have Socialism, everybody will be happy and contented, and there will be no more wretchedness, hatred, jealously, prostitution, war, or injustice?

Jack. I can't tell how far human felicity may go, but I'm sure things will be very much better than now. You see, men will go on trying to better things, and all the progress made then will benefit every one, not only a few.

William. But when is all this going to happen? I'm an old fellow, and now that I know that the world isn't always going on as it does at present, I shouldn't like to die without having seen one day of justice.

Jack. When will it happen? I don't know. It depends upon us. The more we do to open folk's eyes, the sooner the change will come about. However, there is one thing to be said. A good advance has already been made. A few years ago there were very few who preaches Socialism, and they were treated as fools, madmen, or incendiaries. To-day the idea is understood by many. Then the poor suffered in silence, or revolted when maddened by hunger, without knowing the causes or the remedies of their wrongs, and were massacred, or made to massacre one another. To-day all over the world they come to a common understanding, agitate and revolt with the idea of liberating themselves from their employers and from government. They do not count on anything but their own powers, having at last begun to understand that all the parties, into which their employers are divided, are equally their enemies. Let us, then, be active in spreading our ideas now, when the moment is favorable. Let all of us who understand the question unite more closely. Let us fan the fire which smolders among the masses. Let us profit by all discontent, every agitation, every revolt. Let us strike while the iron is hot, without fear or hesitation. Then it will soon be all up with the middle-class, and the reign of well-being will begin.

William. Good! But we must take care to count the cost. To take the property of the employers is easily said. But there are the police, the soldiers. Now that I come to think of it, I'm afraid hand-cuffs, swords and guns are made more to defend the middleclass than anything else.

Jack. That's as plain as a pike-staff. But is the middle-class government use arms against us and try to keep us in slavery with their powder

and melinite, we must teach them that we too can play at such a game as that with the appliances of modern scientific warfare. The poor are the immense majority, and if they begin to understand and taste the advantages of socialism, there is no power on earth which an force them to remain as they are. Consider, the poor are those who work and make everything. If only one large section of them were to stop working, there would be such a to-do, such a panic, that the revolution would quickly prove to be the only possible way out. Consider too, that soldiers, for the most part are themselves poor men, driven by hunger to sell themselves to hurt and butcher their own brothers. As soon as they have seen and understood the facts, they will sympathise, at first secretly and then openly, with the people. You may be sure the revolution will not be half so difficult as it appears at first. The essential thing is to keep the idea that the revolution is necessary constantly to the fore; to be always prepared for it. If we do this, there's no doubt that somehow or another the chance to act will crop up.

William. So you say, and I believe you are right. But there are those who say that the revolution would do no good, and that things will slowly ripen of themselves. What do you say to that?

Jack. You must know that since Socialism has become as serious matter, and the middle-class have begun to be really afraid of it, they have been trying in every possible way to turn aside the tempest and deceive the people. All sorts, even emperors, are beginning to say they are socialists, and I leave you to guess what such "socialism: is worth. Even amongst our own comrades, there have been traitors tempted by attention from the gentlefolks, and the advantages they might gain, to desert the revolutionary cause and set themselves to preach legal means and alliance with political parties, which they say are all more or less socialistic. "We are all socialists not!" as Harcourt said in the House of Commons. Such men treat revolutionaries as fools and worse. Some of them profess still to wish for a revolution, but, meantime they wish a great deal more to be M.P's. When any one tells you that the revolution is not necessary and begins talking about nominating M.P.'s and County Councillors, of making common cause with any middle-class party, if he is a middle-class man, or seems as if he would like to be one, send hum about his business. Amongst those mistaken Socialists there are some who in all good faith wish to do good, and believe they are doing it; but if some one sincerely believing he is doing you good, thrashes you till you're half dead, you will think first of all how to get the stick out of his hands. The most his good intentions will do will be to stop you, when you have got the stick, from breaking his head with it.

William. Right you are! But now there's something else I want to ask you. When you say *Socialists*, what do you mean exactly? I often hear tell of Socialists, and Communists, and Collectivists, and Anarchists, and I know no more than Adam what all those words mean.

Jack. Ah, I'm glad you've got on that. There's nothing like clearing up the meaning of words. Well now, Socialists are folks who believe that property is the first cause of all social ills, and that as long as poverty is not destroyed, neither ignorance, nor slavery, nor political inequality, nor prostitution, nor any of the evils which keep the people in such a horrible condition, can be rooted out; to say nothing of the frightful suffering which arises from actual want. Socialists believe that poverty results from the fact that the soil and all raw materials, machinery and all instruments of labour, belong to a few individuals, who thus are able to dispose of the lives of all the working class, and find themselves involved in perpetual struggle and competition, not only with the proletariat (those who have nothing), but also amongst themselves, for the possession of property. The Socialists believe that by abolishing private property, i.e., the cause, they will at the same time abolish poverty, the effect. This property can and ought to be abolished; for the organization and distribution of wealth ought to be regulated by the real interests of men, without regard for the so-called :acquired rights," which the middle-class claim for themselves, because their ancestors were stronger, more lucky, or more knavish than other men. So you see the name *Socialist* betokens all those who wish that social wealth should be at the service or all men, and that there should no longer be property-owners and proletarians, rich and poor, employers and employed.

William. Then you are a Socialist, that's sure. But what do the words *Communist* and *Collectivist* mean?

Jack. Both Communists and Collectivists are Socialists, but they have different ideas as to what ought to be done when property shall be put in common. The Collectivists say: Each worker, or rather each association of workers, has a right to raw material and the instruments of labour and each man is master of the produce of his own toil. Whilst he lives he does what he likes with it; when he does anything he has put on one side returns to the association. His children, in their turn, have the means of working and of enjoying the fruit of their labour; to let them inherit anything would be a fist step towards inequality and privilege. As regards instruction, the education of children, the maintenance of the aged and infirm, and public works in general, each association of workers must give what is needed to supply the unsupplied wants of the members of the community. The Communists say: Men must love each other and look on each other as members of one family, if things

are to go well with them. Property ought to be common. Work, if it is to be as productive as possible and the aid of machinery employed to the uttermost, must be done by large parties of workers. If we are to make the most of all varieties of soil and atmospheric condition and produce in each locality what that locality can produce best, and it, on the other hand, we are to avoid competition and hared between divers countries, it is needful to establish perfect solidarity between the men of the whole world. Therefore, instead of running the risk of making a confusion in trying to distinguish what you and I each do, let us all work and put everything in common. In this way each will give to society all that his strength permits until enough is produced for every one; and each will take all that he needs, limiting his needs only in those things of which there is not yet plenty for every one.

William. Not so fast! First of all, what do you mean by *Solidarity*? You say there ought to be solidarity between men and I don't know what you mean.

Jack. Look here: in your family, for instance, all that you and your brothers, your wife and your son earn you put in common. You get some food and you eat altogether, and if there is not enough you all pinch yourselves a bit. If one of you is lucky and gains the more than usual, it is a good thing for every one. If, on the contrary, one is out of work or ill, it is a misfortune for you all; for certainly amongst yourselves the one who is not working eats all the same at the common board, and the one who falls ill costs more than any body else. So in your family, instead of trying to take work and bread away from each other, you try to aid each other, because the good o one is the good of all, and the ill of one the ill of all. Thus envy and hatred are kept afar off and a mutual affection is developed, which never exists in a family where there are divided interests. That is what is called solidarity. We must establish amongst mankind the same relations as exist in a truly united family.

William. I understand that. But let us return to what we were speaking of. Tell me, are you a Collectivist of a Communist?

Jack. As for me, I am a Communist, because if people are going to be friends, I believe they ought not to be friends by halves. Collectivism leaves the germs of rivalry and hatred still in existence. But I go further. Even if each could live on what he produces himself, Collectivism would be inferior to Communism, because it would keep men isolated, and so lessen their strength and their sympathy. Besides, as the shoemaker can't eat his shoes, nor the blacksmith live on iron, and as the agriculturalist cannot till the coil without the workers who prepare iron, manufacture implements, etc., it will be necessary to organize exchange between the various producers, keeping a reckoning of what each ones.

Then it will necessarily happen that the shoe maker, for instance, will try to puff the value of his shoes and get as much money as he can in exchange, whilst the agriculturalist, on his side, will give him as little as possible. How the devil can we manage will all this? Collectivism seems to me to give rise to many difficult problems and be a system likely to lead to confusion. Communism, on the contrary, will not give rise to any difficulties. If all work, and all enjoy of the work of all, it only remains to see what are the things needed to satisfy every body and to arrange that these things shall be produced in plenty.

William. So under Communism no money would be wanted.

Jack. Neither money nor anything in its place. Nothing but a register of what is needed and of what is produced, so that production may be kept up the level of need. The only serious difficulty would be if many men refuses to work. But I have already told you the reasons why work, which to-day is a hardship, would then become a pleasure, and, at the same time, a moral obligation from which very few would wish to relieve themselves. Besides, if, in consequence of the bad education we have had, some individuals should refuse to work when the new society begins, they can be left outside the community and given raw material and tools. Then, if they want to eat, they will set to work. But at this moment what we have to realize is that the soil, raw material and instruments of labour, houses and all existing wealth must be put in common. As for the method of organization, the people will do as they please. Practice only will show them the best system. It is easy to foresee that in many places they will establish Collectivism and in many others Communism. When both have been put to the proof, the better will be widely adopted. But mind, the chief thing is that nobody should begin to order the others about or to appropriate the soil or instruments of labour. It will be necessary to b eon the watch, and if this is attempted, to prevent it, even by force of arms. The rest will follow naturally of itself.

William. That too I understand. But, tell me, what does the word *Anarchism* mean?

Jack. Anarchy means *without government*. I've told you already that government is good for nothing but to defend the middle-class, and that, where our interests are in question, the best thing we can do is to look after them ourselves. Instead of electing M.P.'s and County Councillors to make and unmake laws for us to obey, we will discuss our affairs ourselves, and when it is needful to commission someone else to carry out our decisions, we will ask hum to do so and so, and not otherwise. If there is something which can't be dome right off, we will commission capable persons to look into it, study it and let us know what they think had better be done. But, at all events, nothing will be done on our behalf

without our will. And thus our delegates will not be individuals to whom we have given the right to command us and impose laws upon us. They will be persons chosen for their capacity, how will have no authority, but simply be charged with the duty of executing what the people have decided upon. For example, some will be charged to organize schools, others to make streets, or look after the exchange of produce, just as to-day a shoe-maker is asked to make a pair of shoes.

William. Pray explain a little more. How could I, a poor, ignorant old fellow, undertake all the business which is done by M.P.'s and ministers?

Jack. And what good do these M.P.'s and ministers do, that you should bemoan yourself for not being able to do the like? They make laws and organize the public might to keep the people down, in the interest of the property-owners. That's all. It is a skill we do not need. True, the ministers and M.P.'s do busy themselves about good and useful things, but only to turn them to the profit of a class and hinder progress by means of useless and vexatious enactments. For instance, these gentry busy themselves about railways; but why should they? Would not the engineers, mechanics, and workmen of all sorts be enough? And would not the locomotives run just the same if ministers, M.P.'s, shareholders, and other parasites disappeared? It is just the same with the post and telegraph office, navigation, education, hospitals, all things carried on by workers of one sort or another, with whom the government only interferes to do harm. Politics, as they are understood by politicians, are a difficult art for us, because in good earnest they have nothing to do with the people's real interests. But if they are understood by politicians, are a difficult art for us, because in good earnest they have nothing to do with the people's real interests. But if their end was to satisfy the actual needs of the population, when they would be more difficult for an M.P. than for us. What can M.P.'s residing in London know of the needs of the country districts? How can these folks, who have mostly wasted their time in trying to learn Greek and Latin, which they don't know after all, understand the interests of the various crafts and industries? Things would go very differently if each busied himself with what he knows about and he needs he has ascertained on his own account. When once the revolution has taken place, we shall have to begin at the bottom, so to speak. Under the influence of the propaganda and the enthusiasm of the time, the various trades in each district, parish, or town, will form associations. And who can understand better than you the interests of your own trade and your own locality. Afterwards, when it is desirable to bring several trades or several districts to a common agreement, delegates from each will carry the wishes of those who have sent them to a special congress, and do their best to reconcile the diverse needs and

wishes. But their deliberations will always be submitted to the control and approbation of their principals, so that the interests of the people will not be neglected. Thus gradually the human race will be brought into harmony.

William. But how shall we manage if in a country or an association there are some who are of a different opinion from the rest? The larger number will be sure to have the upper hand, won't they?

Jack. Not by right. For as regards truth and justice numbers ought to go for nothing. One may be in the right against a hundred, against a hundred thousand, against every body. Practically, we must do as best we can. If we cannot obtain unanimity, those who agree and are the majority will carry out their idea, within the limits of their won group, and if experience shows they were right, there is no doubt but that they will be imitated. If not, it is a proof that the minority were in the right, and action will be taken accordingly. Thus the principles of equality and justice, upon which society ought to be founded, will not be violated. But remark that the questions upon which people cannot come to an agreement will be small in number and importance, because there will no longer be the division of interests which exists to-day. For each will then be free to choose his country and the association, *i.e.*, the companions with whom he likes to live. Also the matters to be decided will be things every one can understand, belonging rather to practical life and positive science than to the domain of theory with this endless differences of opinion. When the best solution of such and such a problem has been arrived at by experience, the question will be how to persuade folks by practically showing them the thing, not how to crush them under a majority of votes. Would you not laugh if to-day citizens were called upon to vote the season for sowing seed, when it is a matter already settled by experience? And if it were not yet entirely fixed, would you have recourse to a vote to decide it, rather than to experience? All public and private affairs will be treated like this.

William. But what if some out of mere pigheadedness and self-will should oppose a decision made in the interests of all?

Jack. Then, of course, it would be needful to take forcible action. For if it is unjust that the majority should oppress the minority, the contrary would be quite as unjust; and if the minority has a right to rebel, the majority has a right to defend itself. But do not forget that always and everywhere all men have an undeniable right to the materials and instruments of labour. Though it is truth hat this solution is not completely satisfactory. The individuals put out of the association would be deprived of many social advantages, which an isolated person or group must do without, because they can only be procured by the coopera-

tion of a great number of human beings. But what would you have? These malcontents cannot fairly demand that the wishes of many others should be sacrificed for their sakes. Given solidarity, fraternity, mutual aid, and, where needful, mutual consideration and support, and you may be convinced that civil tyranny or war will not arise. Rest assured rather, that men will hardly have become masters of their own destinies before solidarity will grow up amongst them. For tyranny and civil war work evil to all, and solidarity is the only condition in which our ideals can be realized, and which will bring with it peace, prosperity, and universal freedom. Note too that progress, while it rends always to unite men, tends also to render them more independent and self-sufficing. For example, to-day, to ravel rapidly over land, it is necessary to make use of the railway, the construction and working of which require the collective labour of many persons. Therefore the traveler will still, under Anarchy, be obliged to adapt his arrangements to the ours and regulations which the majority have thought best. It, however, someone invents a locomotive which one man can guide, without danger to himself or others, on any street, then he will not need to adapt himself in this matter to the arrangements of other folks, and every one will be able to travel where and when he pleases. So it id with thousands of other things that are, or that will be in the future. Thus it is clear that the tendency of progress is towards a certain relation between men, which may be defined by the formula *Moral Solidarity and Material Independence*.

William. That is just is. So you are a Socialist, and amongst Socialists you are specifically a Communist and an Anarchist. But I have heard say too that you are an Internationalist. What does that mean?

Jack. Did you ever hear of the International Working Men's Association? About thirty years ago, a great association was formed amongst the workmen of all civilized countries, to take counsel together about the wrongs which the workers of every land alike suffer from the exploitation of property-owners, and to act together so as to bring about a universal social revolution. For, in every country which has reached our stage of civilization, the workers are exploited in much the same way, and the ruling classes are banded together to keep the masses down. Therefore, the common interests of the workers of all lands are far stronger than their national differences, and it is only by acting in common, as their exploiters act in common, that they can throw off the yoke of capitalism. The International Working Men's Association no longer exists. Nevertheless, the great labour movements which agitate the workers have arisen from it. Also the carious Socialist parties in different countries, specifically the International Socialist Anarchist Revolutionary Party, which is now organising to give the death blow to the

middle-class society of to-day. The aim of this party is of do everything to spread the principles of Anarchist Socialism; to show how hopeless it is to look to voluntary concessions from property owners or governments, or to gradual constitutional reforms; to awaken the people to a consciousness of their rights, and rouse in them the spirit of revolt; to urge them on to make the social revolution, *i.e.,* to destroy all government and to put all existing wealth in common. Any one who accepts this programme and wishes to join others in striving for it, belongs to this party. The party has no head, no authority; it is entirely founded on spontaneous and voluntary agreement amongst those who are fighting for the same cause. Therefore, each individual that belongs to it is completely free to join in intimate companionship with those he prefers, to use such means as he things best, and to spread his own particular ideas in his own particular way, so long, of course, as he does not thereby oppose the general programme and tactics of the party.

William. Then are all who accept Socialistic, Anarchic, Revolutionary principles members of this party?

Jack. No. A man my perfectly agree with our programme, but, for one reason or another, may prefer to act alone, or with a few others, without forming connections of effective solidarity and cooperation with the mass of those who accept the programme. This may be suitable for certain individuals, or for certain special purposes, but it cannot be the general method, because isolation is a cause of weakness, and creates antipathy and rivalry where there ought to be fraternity and concord. Still in every way we always consider as friends and comrades the men and women who are striving in any fashion for the idea for which we strive. But again there may be folks convinced of the truth of the idea, but keeping their convictions to themselves, not taking the trouble to spread what they believe is right. One can't say that such folks are not Socialists and Anarchists theoretically, because they think as we do; but their convictions certainly must be very weak, or they themselves very poor spirited. When a man sees the terrible evils that afflict himself and his fellows, and believes he knows a remedy which would cure them, how can he stand inactive, if he has any heart at all? If a man does not know the truth, he cannot be blamed; but the man who knows it and set it on one side is a heartless coward.

William. You are right. I'm going to think very seriously indeed over what you've said. And when I'm thoroughly convinced in my own mind that it's true, I shall join the party, and do all I can to spread the sacred truth. And if the gentlefolks should call me a scoundrel or a fool, I will tell them to work and suffer as I do, and then they will have a right to speak.

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The Republic Of The Boys And That Of The Bearded Men

Errico Malatesta

5 January 1884

About fifteen years ago, this writer was a youngster studying rhetoric and Roman history, Greek, Latin, and Giobertian philosophy.

Despite the best efforts of my teachers, schooling did not managed to stifle my nature and, in the stultifying, corruptive modern high school setting, I managed to keep my mind wholesome and my heart unblemished.

By nature affectionate and impassioned, I dreamed of an ideal world in which all would love one another and be happy. Whenever I wearied of daydreams, I succumbed to reality, took a look around me, and saw: here, someone shivering from cold and hunger and meekly seeking alms in the shape of a crust of bread; there, some children crying; and over yonder, some men mouthing curses; and my heart froze in horror.

Later, I was more vigilant and realized that a tremendous injustice—a nonsensical system—was grinding humanity down and condemning it to pain; labor was degraded and almost regarded as dishonorable, the working man dying of hunger so there was food for his idle master's orgies. As my heart was swollen with rage, I was reminded of the Gracchi and Spartacus and I could feel the spirit of the tribune and the rebel inside me.

And as I had often heard it said that the republic is the very negation of what was worrying me, and that in the republic all men are equals; since wherever and whenever the echo of a rebellion of the wretches and slaves reached me from, it was intermingled with the word "republic"; and since we in school were left in ignorance of the modern world so that we might be rendered dolts by the truncated, phoney history of

ancient Rome, and would never have been able to find a mode of social coexistence outside of the Roman formulae, I called myself a republican and, it seemed to me, that made up for all of the desires and wrath swirling in my head.

I was not clear as to what this republic would be like , but I reckoned I knew and that was enough for me: in my eyes, the republic was the kingdom of equality, love, and happiness; it was the loving dream of my imagination become reality.

Oh, how my heart beat in my youthful breast! I imagined myself now as some modern day Brutus, plunging a blade into the breast of a latter-day Caesar; or at the head of a band of rebels; or atop a barricade, scattering the tyrant's acolytes; or I imagined myself on a rostrum, thundering against the people's enemies. I measured my height and stroked my lips to see if any whiskers had sprouted; oh, how I yearned to be grown up and to leave high school and commit myself entirely to the republican cause!

That day finally arrived and I entered the outside world filled with selfless intentions, filled with hopes and dreams.

The republic had been so much the stuff of my dreams that I could not help but scurry to wherever I had been told there was a republican venture, aspiration or yearning; and it was as a republican that I had my first sight of the king's jails.

But then I had second thoughts. I studied the history that I had previously learned from inane, lying textbooks and saw how the republic had always turned out to be a government like any other—or even worse than the rest—and that under the republic, as under the monarchy, there is wretchedness and injustice and the people are mown down when they try to shrug off the yoke.

I looked around the contemporary world and saw that countries where there is a republic are no better off than those under a monarchy. There is a republic in America, and, for all her expanses of free land, for all her super-abundant production, there are people starving to death. They have a republic, but despite the freedom and equality written into the constitution, the poor man has no human dignity, and the cavalry uses its clubs or sabres to disperse workers clamoring for bread and jobs. They have their republic, but the native peoples are reduced to desperate straits and hunted down like wild animals... What am I saying? In America, as in Rome and in Greece before her, we have seen that the republic is compatible with slavery!

There's a republic in Switzerland, yet there is poverty, the Protestant and Catholic clergy rule the roost, and one cannot live in a city without

a residence permit, and the free citizens of Switzerland trade their votes for a few glasses of beer!

There's a republic in France (it had recently been established, then) and it started its existence with the slaughter of 50,000 Parisians. It remains deferential towards the clergy and it sends its troops in whenever the workers raise their heads, to force submission to the bosses and quiet acceptance of their wretchedness.

So I said to myself, the republic is not what I dreamt it was; the high-school student's vague aspiration was to one thing, but the reality was different, very different. My oldest comrades, the ones I thought of as my teachers, had indeed said that the republics in existence were not real republics and that, in Italy, the republic would deliver justice, equality, liberty, well-being; but I knew that the same things had been said in France prior to the triumph of the republic, and I also knew that similar things had been said and promised by every single party needing the people's support in order to ascend to power... and I wanted to see things clearly.

The nature of a society, I reckoned, cannot depend on names and incidental forms, but rather must depend on the relationship of each member with the other members and with the society as a whole. Neither could the effect of a change in society be determined solely by the wishes and intentions of the party that advocates it, since a party that accepts and subscribes to certain positions suffers the consequences, or it gets caught up in hatching rebellions that come to nothing until that party makes up its mind to change its position.

I began to probe the very essence of modern society, the nature of social relations, the derivation of public powers, the operation of political and economic factors and everything prompted me to conclude that there is essentially no difference between monarchy and republic. So I was no longer surprised that republics bear such a strong resemblance to monarchies. As man's primary need and the essential prerequisite of existence is that he is able to eat, it is only natural that the character of a society is determined primarily by the manner in which man secures the means of survival, how wealth is produced and distributed... Economic factors dominate every aspect of the life of society.

Under a monarchy, all means of production are in the hands of a few individuals, and the masses, who have nothing but their labor force, have to seek work from those who own those means, and must abide by their conditions. The distribution of goods is based on the reciprocal but unequal need that bosses and workers have of each other and on the competition between the famished. And since the bosses enjoy the benefit of an established position and can fall back upon their sav-

ings, whereas the worker needs to work on a daily basis in order to eat, and since, also, there are generally more workers than the bosses need, the working man's wages do not normally exceed what is strictly necessary for the most primitive and vegetative survival. And so, at the end of the day, under a monarchy we find a tiny rulingclass that is corrupt and corrupting, and on the other side, the impoverished and brutalized masses.

Would a republic be any different? Certainly not, since the republic preserves the foundation of the present organization—private property—and cannot escape the consequences of that ownership model.

But, as the more advanced republicans object, under the republic it is the people that command by means of universal suffrage: let us make our republic and the people, should they see fit, will amend the ownership arrangements. But universal suffrage can be found under the monarchy, too, and the people use it to endorse their subject status; how on earth could the people acquire the consciousness and capability they lack today just by sending the king packing and swapping one status for another? But the republic has been made time and time again in many countries, and universal suffrage has not been any more productive than it is under the monarchy. Why would it be any different this time?

What does it matter if some right is granted to the people, when the people are not equipped with the means to exercise it? As I have already stated, economic factors dominate everything: a people dying of hunger will always be stupid and slavish, and, if they vote, will vote for their masters.

We need to move beyond republican thinking and instead of accepting the present economic position as our starting point, we need to make a fresh start by radically altering it, and effectively doing away with private ownership. Then we will assure our survival, will all be equal in terms of wealth, and may well be able to begin to understand one another.

All of these things passed through my mind and before my eyes, and what happens to all men of feeling who investigate the laws of human coexistence without preconceptions happened to me: I was horrified by the republic, which is a form of government whose sole use is that—like every other government—it sanctions and champions established privileges... And I turned into a socialist.

Selfless youngsters, who share this dream of a republic that will deliver peace and well being: Think again! The real republic, the republic of the rulers, is not the one I dreamed of at school. Once the republic

has been made, if you remain pure and honest like you are today, you will be going to jail or will be mown down just the same as you would be today. At that point you will feel betrayed, but that will not be true: you will have reaped just what you sowed.

Between Peasants

A Dialogue on Anarchy

Errico Malatesta

1884

Introduction

The numerous editions and translations of this pamphlet by Errico Malatesta all over the world have already demonstrated that its importance and relevance have been universally recognized.

Fra Contadini shares the modest tone of Malatesta's other writings, more obvious here through the use of dialogue. It is in fact a chat which two peasants, one more politicised than the other, could very well have had in the north of Italy at the end of the last century. It manages to avoid the affectation which often harms literary works which–like this one–do not conceal their intent to educate, because in reality this is a didactic piece of work. Malatesta's intention is to supply the anarchist movement (then the international socialist anarchist revolutionary party) with an agile instrument of propaganda for the peasants and small artisans, groups that were in the phase of proletarianisation. In other words for the starving masses who swelled the major Italian cities at the end of the last century drawn by the mirage of work in developing industry.

The Florence of 1884 had not changed much from that which had known the revolutionary work of Bakunin twenty years previously. Urbanisation had become a visible phenomenon, with a whole store of indescribable miseries for the poor people emarginated by the mechanism of capitalist exploitation. The phase of the building of the monopolies which the young Italian bourgeoisie accomplished with ease immediately after the Unification, was followed by a period of deflation. Poverty increased and wealth assumed a demonic glare in the rebellious dreams of the hungry.

Among Malatesta's aims not the least is that of insurrection. The study of particular problems is never an end in itself. It is not a question of a utopian vision of what anarchist society will be after the social revolution, but of violent expropriation, the recurring question that Malatesta continually draws our attention back to: the taking of wealth by the poor and their management of it in common.

"... We shall kindle the fire that is smouldering among the masses, take advantage of the discontent, the movements, the revolts, and strike a vigorous blow. We are not afraid, and soon the bourgeois catastrophe will go up in smoke and the reign of wellbeing begin." These

words mark the maximum point of Malatesta's analyses contained in the present pamphlet. The individual arguments faced, the various theoretical questions take on a different meaning and perspective in the light of this phrase. Taken individually problems such as production, machinery, work, planning, price mechanisms, Government, the State, the revolution considered in abstract terms, can each be treated with that detached perspective which so many comrades have substituted for the true meaning of anarchism. Here these problems take on a different hue. Malatesta's intent is not to convince a bourgeois liberal in the throes of his guilty conscience, he is not interested in getting into a learned argument with an economist who is still suffering indigestion from Marx, just as he is not interested in putting a sociologist in difficulty concerning the possibility of social organisation without government or State. His aim is to convince the peasant, the worker, the emarginated "lumpen" proletarian reader, of the mechanism of exploitation and repression, of the system of ideological and political swindling, with the aim of pushing them to rebel in the struggle against the class enemies, and, ultimately, to insurrection. Whoever does not bear this objective in mind falsifies the profound meaning of this pamphlet. It is not possible to read truly revolutionary literature in the same key as one would read a sociological treatise.

The importance of an argument based on the limitations of the solutions proposed by Malatesta diminishes in this way. Clearly his singularly acute and lucid analyses such of those of monopoly and inflation find themselves alongside others whose contradictions Malatesta was not able to overcome, such as that which concluded with the inevitability of an anarchist society, or where he foresees the need for planning, etc.. To "update" Malatesta's work would be senseless, as would be any attempts of those who would highlight its contradictions in order to declare it "out of date". Taken as a whole it is still functional and admirably suited to the aim for which it was written: to push the most backward strata of the exploited to insurrection. It is an instrument of struggle, not a manual of anarchist theory. The clarity of vision that emanates from this pamphlet should not culminate in more fruitless theorising, therefore, but in practical insurrection and expropriation.

Alfredo M. Bonanno
3 May 1981

Fra Contadini

Bert: Ah! George, is that you? I'm glad to see you. I've been wanting to talk to you for a while. O, George! George! I've been hearing so many things about you! When you lived in the country you were a good lad, quite an example to the young people of your age...If your poor father were alive...

George: Bert, what's wrong? What have I done to deserve this? And why would my poor father have been dissatisfied with me?

Bert: Don't be offended, George. I'm an old man, and speaking for your own good. Besides, I was a close friend of old Andrew your father and it upsets me as if you were my own son to see you turned out so badly, especially when I think of the hopes your father had for you and the sacrifices he made to give you a good upbringing.

George: But what are you talking about? Am I not an honest worker? I've never done anyone any harm. On the contrary, I've always done what little good I could, so why would my father have been ashamed of me? I do my best to learn and improve, and try together with my comrades to do something about the evils that afflict us all. So why are you getting at me like this?

Bert: Ah, that's just it! I know quite well that you work and help your neighbours. You're a good lad, everybody in the area says so. But haven't you been in prison several times, and it's said the police keep an eye on you and that only to be seen talking to you is enough to get one in to trouble. But I'm fond of you, and I'll speak to you in spite of that. George, take the advice of an old man: leave politics to the gentry who have nothing to do, and think of getting on in life. That's the only way to get on in peace and in the grace of God; if you don't you'll lose body and soul. Listen: stop hanging around in bad company. Everybody knows they're the ones that are leading the sons of the poor astray.

George: Believe me, Bert, my comrades are all honest people. The bread they eat is paid for in sweat and tears. Leave the bosses, men who would suck the last drop of our blood then call us hooligans if we as much as grumble, and criminals if we try to improve our situation and escape from their tyranny to speak ill of them. It's true that my companions and I have been in prison, but we were there for the right reasons. We'll end up there again, or perhaps even worse things will happen to

us, but it will be for the good of all, because we want to destroy all the injustice and poverty. And you, who've worked all your life and gone hungry too—and who might end up in some hospice when you're old and no longer able to work—you at least ought not to put yourself on the side of the landlords and government that come down on those who are trying to improve the lot of the poor.

Bert: My dear boy, I know well enough the world's not right, and that to put it in order would be well nigh impossible. So let's take things as they come and pray to God we never want for a crust of bread at least. There always have been rich and poor, and we who were born to work should be content with what God gives us. That's the only way to live in peace and save our honour.

George: You talk about honour! Look at the landowners. They've taken everything from us after making us work like beasts for a crust of bread, then, squandering in wealth and debauchery, they say that we, to be honest men, must put up with all this with a smile and watch them grow fat on our backs without even complaining. If we don't, and remind ourselves that we are men too and that whoever works has the right to eat, they say we're a bad, dishonest lot and get their police to throw us in prison, and the priests to send us to hell.

Hear me out Bert, you're a worker, and have never tried to exploit your fellow man. The scoundrels, the men of no honour, are those living off injustice after taking possession of everything under the sun and reducing people through poverty to a flock of sheep who calmly allow themselves to be shorn and slaughtered. And you join them in criticising us? It's not enough for them to have their own government made up of the gentry for the gentry. They also need the workers, our brothers, to turn against us because we want them to have bread and freedom as well.

Ah! if it wasn't due to centuries of poverty and ignorance due to forced slavery, I'd say those with the least dignity of all are the poor who support the oppressors of humanity, and not us at all. We are risking the miserable crust of bread and shred of freedom we have so that we can reach the stage where everyone will live well.

Bert: Yes, yes, these are fine words. But nothing can be done properly without the fear of God. You can't convince me. I've heard the parish priest say you and your comrades are a bunch of heretics. Father Anthony, who has studied and reads the newspapers, says you're all mad hooligans, that you don't want to work for a living and that instead of doing the workers any good you're preventing the landlords from doing the best they can for us.

George: Now Bert, if we want to talk reasonably, let's leave God and the saints out of it, because the name of God is used as a pretext and justification by all those who want to deceive and oppress their fellow men. Kings say God gave them the right to reign, and when two kings contest the same country, both say they have been sent by God. God is always on the side of those who have most soldiers and the best weapons. The property owner, the profiteer, the monopolist, all speak of God. And the catholic, protestant, Jewish and Turkish priests and ministers each say they are God's representative, and in the name of God make war on each other and try to feather their own nests. No one bothers about the poor.

To hear them, God has given them everything and condemned us to poverty and grinding toil. They are to have paradise in this world and the next as well while we're condemned to hell on this earth and paradise only in the world of yonder, and only then if we've been obedient slaves...and if they allow us a place.

Listen: I don't want to go into problems of conscience, everyone's free to think what they like. But as far as I'm concerned, I don't believe in God or any of the stories the priests tell us, because whoever tells them always has a vested interest in doing so, and because there are so many religions each one of whose priests claim to have the truth, shows that no one has it. I too could invent a world of fairy stories and say that whoever didn't believe me would be condemned to eternal fire. If I did you'd say I was an imposter. But if I got hold of a child and told him the same thing without anyone else contradicting me, once he grew up he'd believe me just as you believe the priest.

In any case, you're free to believe what you like, but don't come telling me that your God wants you to go hungry, wants your children to grow up sick and stunted due to lack of food and medical care, and your daughters to be exposed to becoming the mistresses of your perfumed young masters. Because then I'd say your God's an assassin.

If there is a God, he's never told anyone what he wants. So let's get on with doing good for ourselves and others in *this* world. In the next, if there is a God and he is just, we'll find ourselves all the better off for having struggled to do good than if we caused suffering or continued to allow others to do so as, according to the parish priest, we're all brothers and God's creatures.

Take my word for it: today God condemns you to toil because you are poor. If tomorrow you in some way succeeded in getting a lot of money together, no matter how you did it, you'd immediately acquire the right to do no work, ill-treat the peasants, usurp the honour of poor girls

...and God would let you carry on just as he lets your employers carry on.

Bert: Gracious me! Ever since you learned to read and write you could confuse a lawyer with your talk. You've said things that send shivers down my spine. I've seen the way the landlord's son's eyes light up when he looks at my daughter Rosina... Oh! if my Rosina...Ah! let's change the subject.

I'm old and I know that this is a vile, miserable world, but that's no reason to become rogues too. But tell me: is it true that you want to take property from everyone that has it?

George: You're right! That's just what we want! When you want to know something that concerns the poor, never ask the landowners. They'll never tell you the truth, because no one ever speaks against his own interests. If you want to know what anarchists want, ask me and my comrades, not priests like Father Anthony. Instead, when the priest starts to talk about such things, ask him why it is that you're eating potatoes (when there are any) and he, who spends the whole day doing nothing with a finger inside a half-shut book, is eating roast beef with his...niece. Ask him why he always keeps in with the landowners and only comes to us when there is something to swallow. Ask him why he always says the landlords and police are right, and why, instead of taking bread from the mouths of the poor people with the excuse of praying for the souls of the dead, he doesn't do something to help the living a bit, and stop living at others expense. Next time you see Father Anthony, who is young and strong, and who has studied and spends his time in the cafe playing cards or working out fiddles with the town council, tell him that before talking about us, he'd better stop fooling about and learn a bit about hard work and poverty.

Bert: You're right there. But let's get back to what we were talking about. Is it or isn't it true that you want to take other people's property?

George: It's not true. We don't want to take anything for ourselves, we want the people to take the land back from the landowners and put it in common for the use of everyone.

If they did this, people wouldn't be taking other people's property but taking what belongs to them by right.

Bert: So the land really belongs to us?

George: Of course, it belongs to everybody. Who gave it to the landowners? What did they do to earn it? What right did they have to take possession of it and what right do they have to keep it?

Bert: Their ancestors left it to them.

George: And who gave it to their ancestors? Certainly, some men, stronger and more fortunate than others, took possession of everything

that exists. They forced others to work for them and, not content with living in idleness, oppressing and starving the great mass around them, they left the property they'd stolen to their children and their childrens' children, condemning the whole of future humanity to being the slaves of their descendants now weakened by idleness and able to do what they like without having to answer to anyone. If it wasn't for the fact that they've everything in hand and want to hold on to it by force as their fathers did we'd almost feel sorry for them.

Does all that seem right to you?

Bert: If they took the land unjustly, yes. But the landlords say they worked for the land, and it doesn't seem right to me to take away from someone what they've achieved by their own efforts.

George: Ah yes! the same old story! Those who don't work and who've never worked always speak in the name of work.

Now, you tell me where metal, coal, stone and so on come from. They were either made by God or were the spontaneous work of nature. Certainly, we all found them when we came into the world, so they should be available to everybody. What would you say if the landowners wanted to take the air for themselves and only allow us a little of the most putrid of it , making us pay for it with our sweat and toil? The only difference between the air and the earth is that they've found a way to divide up the earth and not the air. If they find a way, they'll do the same with the air as they've done with the earth.

Bert: True, that seems right to me. The earth and all the things of nature should belong to everyone...But not everything was found right there in front of us.

George: Of course, many things have been produced by the work of human beings, in fact the earth itself wouldn't be worth much if it hadn't been reclaimed and cultivated by human effort. By rights these things should belong to whoever produced them. How is it that they find themselves in the hands of precisely those who have done nothing at all to produce them?

Bert: But the landlords say their ancestors worked and slaved.

George: But they should say that their ancestors forced others to work for them without pay exactly as they are doing today. History shows that the workers' conditions have always been miserable and that, exactly as now, whoever has worked without exploiting others, not only has never been able to save, but hasn't even had enough to satisfy his own hunger.

Look at the example you have before your very eyes. Doesn't everything the workers produce end up in the hands of the bosses who just stand looking on?

Today they buy a piece of marshland cheap. They put men on it and give them barely enough to prevent them from dying of hunger, then go and idle their time away in the city. A few years later, this useless piece of land becomes a garden worth a hundred times what it cost to start with. The sons who inherit this treasure will say they're benefiting from the work of their fathers, and the sons of those who really worked and suffered will continue to work and suffer. What do you think?

Bert: But…if the world really has always been as it is now, then nothing belongs to the landlords at all.

George: All right then, I'll try to put everything in favour of the landowners. Let's suppose they were all sons of men who, in the past had worked and saved, and the workers were all lazy squanderers. You can see that what I'm saying is absurd, but all the same, even if this was the case, would the present social organisation be any more fair? If you work and I'm a layabout, it's only right that I should be punished for my laziness, but it's not right that my children should be punished as well or that they should have to kill themselves with work or die of hunger in order to keep your children in wealth and plenty.

Bert: These are fine thoughts, and I can't say you're wrong, but in the meantime the landlords have the land, and in the long run we should be grateful to them, for without them we wouldn't have the means to live.

George: Yes, they have the land because they took it with violence, and they've flourished by taking the fruit of others' labour for themselves.

But just as they took it, so they can give it back.

Up until now men have made war against each other. They've tried to snatch the bread from each other's mouths and done everything they could to keep their fellow down in order to use him like they would a beast. But it's time to put an end to this. Nothing can be gained by war and throughout time man has known poverty, slavery, crime, prostitution, and, from time to time, blood-lettings called wars or revolutions. By getting on well, loving and helping each other, we would no longer have so many ills or those who have all and others who have nothing, and everyone would do the best he could.

I know well enough that the rich, who are used to commanding and to living without working, don't want to change the system. We'll listen though to what they have to say. If they decide to understand, either through love or fear, that there's to be no more hatred and injustice among men and that everyone should take a share of the work, so much the better. On the other hand, if they want to hold us down so they can go on enjoying the results of their and their ancestors' violence and theft, then so much the worse for them. They've taken all that they have by

force, and by force we shall take it back from them. If the poor would only agree, it's we who are the strongest.

Bert: But if there were no landlords any more how would we live? Who'd give us work?

George: I can't believe it! Look! you see it every day. It's you who till the soil, sow the seeds, reap the harvest, grind and carry the wheat to the barn. It's you who make the wine, the oil, the cheese, and you ask how you could live without the landlords? Ask rather how the landlords would survive if it wasn't for us poor fools, workers of the land and the city, who feed and clothe them and provide for their children so that they can have a good time.

A few minutes ago you wanted to thank your bosses because they give you the means to live. Don't you see that it's they who live off your toil, every piece of bread they put in their mouths has been stolen from our children, every present they give their women represents the poverty, hunger, cold, perhaps the prostitution of ours?

What do the landlords produce? Nothing. So everything they consume has been stolen from the workers.

Just imagine that tomorrow all the labourers were to disappear from the fields: there would be no one left working on the land and the landowners would go hungry. If the cobblers disappear, no more shoes will be made; if the builders disappear, no houses could be built, and so on. For every class of workers that disappears, a branch of production will disappear and people will have to go without all useful and necessary things.

But what damage would be done if the landlords were to disappear? It would be like a plague of locusts disappearing.

Bert: Yes, it's true that we are the ones that produce everything, but how can I grow corn if I have no land, animals, or seeds? I tell you, there's no way out, we have to work under the bosses.

George: Oh, Bert, do we agree or don't we? We must take what we need from the landowners—the land, the tools, the seeds and everything.

For as long as the land and the machinery for working it is in the hands of the landowners, the workers will always be held down and know nothing but poverty and slavery. So, remember, the first thing to be done is to take the land back from the landowners, otherwise nothing will ever change.

Bert: You're right, I've already said so. But what do you want, all this is so new to me, my head's reeling.

But explain to me what you want to do. What would be done with this land that's to be taken from the landlords? It would be a lot for one person wouldn't it?

George: No! when you hear it said that we want a share for ourselves, that we want half and so on, remember, whoever's saying so is either ignorant or in bad faith.

Bert: But then? I don't understand at all.

George: Look, it's quite simple. We want to put everything in common, starting from the principle that everybody should do some work and all should live as well as possible. It's not possible to live in this world without working, so if one person doesn't do anything he has to live at the expense of others, which is unfair and harmful. Obviously when I say that everybody should work I mean all those that are able to, and do the amount suited to them. The lame, the weak and the aged should be supported by society, because it is the duty of humanity that no one should suffer. We'll grow old too, or could become crippled or weak, just as those dearest to us might.

Now, if you think carefully you'll see that all the wealth, everything that exists for the use of human beings, can be divided into two parts. One part, which includes the land, machinery, tools, means of transport, natural resources and so on, is indispensable and must be put in common for everybody to use. As far as the way of organising the way of employing all this, i.e. work, is concerned, that is something that would be decided by all. The best solution would be to work in common, because more could be produced with less effort. In fact, work in common would be welcomed by everybody, because for each person to work for themselves would mean doing without machines that reduce work to something light and pleasant, and because when people no longer need to snatch the bread from each others' mouths they'll stop acting like cats and dogs and will enjoy living together and doing things in common. In any case, even if some people preferred working in isolation, there would be no problem about that. The essential thing is that no one lives without working or by forcing others to work for them. This would no longer happen because each person, having the right to what he needs, would not need to work under somebody else.

The second part of social wealth includes the things that man consumes directly such as food, clothing and housing. Of these, what already exists must undoubtedly be put in common and distributed in such a way as to enable us to go ahead to a new harvest, and wait until new goods are produced by industry. What is produced after the revolution, when there are no longer idle employers living off the toil of the hungry working people, will be distributed as the workers of each area desire. Working together and putting everything in common would be best: in that way production could be regulated so as to guarantee everyone the maximum enjoyment possible, and that would be that. Otherwise, an

account could be kept of what each person produced, so that each one could take goods equivalent to the amount of work they did. This would be difficult to calculate. In fact I think it would be impossible. But because of that, when the difficulties of proportional distribution are understood, the idea of putting everything in common will be more easily accepted.

In any case everyone must be assured of the basic needs such as bread, housing, water and so on, independently of the quality of work each one is able to do. No matter what form of organisation be adopted, heredity should no longer exist because it's wrong that some people find every comfort at birth and others find hunger and want, that some be born rich and others poor. And even if the idea were accepted that each person owned what he produced and could save, on his death all his savings would return to the community.

Meanwhile, the young should be brought up and taught at everybody's expense, in such a way as to ensure they develop to the height of their capabilities. Without this there would be neither justice nor equality, and the principle of each person having an equal right to the instruments of work would be violated because learning and moral strength are true instruments of work, and it wouldn't be enough to give everyone the land and machinery if they weren't able to use them to the best of their ability.

I shall say nothing of woman, because for us woman must be equal to man, and when we say man, we mean human being, without distinction of sex.

Bert: There is something though. To take property from the landlords who've robbed and starved the poor is fair enough. But if someone has managed through hard work and saving to put money aside and buy himself an acre or two, or a small shop, by what right could this be taken away from him?

George: That would be very difficult. Today, where the capitalists and government have taken the best of the product, it's impossible to save out of one's own labour. You know yourself, after years of hard work you are still as poor as before. Moreover I've already said that each person has a right to raw materials and tools, so if someone had a small field that he'd earned himself with his own hands, he could very well hold on to it. Over and above that he'd be given perfected tools, manure and anything else he needed to get the best possible use out of the earth. Of course, it would be best for him to put everything in common, but there would be no need to force anyone to do this because self interest would indicate the advantage of a communal system to everyone. Each person would be so much better off working the land in common than doing

so alone and, especially with the invention of new machinery, isolated work would become less and less fruitful.

Bert: Ah! machines. They should all be destroyed! They are what are ruining the labourers and taking away work from the poor people. Here in this area you can see. Each time a new machine arrives our pay is reduced and some of us are laid off and forced to go away and die of hunger somewhere. They're even worse in the town. At least if there weren't any machines the landlords would have more need of our labour, and we'd be a bit better off.

George: You're right, Bert, to believe that machines are one of the causes of poverty and lack of work, but this is because they belong to the bosses. If, on the other hand, they belonged to the workers, it would be quite the opposite; they'd become the main source of human well-being. In fact, machines, basically, only work instead of us and more quickly than we do. Thanks to them man will no longer have to work hours on end to serve his needs or have to make superhuman efforts! If machines were used in all branches of production and belonged to everyone, all the requirements of consumption could be satisfied with a few hours of light, healthy and pleasant work, and each worker would have time to study, cultivate friendships, in a word, to live and enjoy life, benefiting from all the conquests of science and civilisation. So remember, the machines shouldn't be destroyed, but taken over. But, be warned, the landlords will defend their machines, or rather have them defended, just as much against those who want to take them over as from those who want to destroy them. So, the risk being equal, it would be really stupid to destroy them instead of taking them over. Would you destroy grain and houses because in the hands of the landowners they mean so much poverty and slavery, while in our hands they'd be wealth and freedom?

Bert: But everybody would have to be willing to go ahead with this system if it were to work, wouldn't they?

George: Of course.

Bert: And if there are some who want to live for nothing without doing any work? Work is hard and nobody likes it.

George: You're confusing society as it is today with the one that'll exist after the revolution. You said nobody likes hard work. But would you be able to spend days on end doing nothing?

Bert: Not me, because I'm accustomed to hard work, and when I've got nothing to do I don't know what to do with my hands. But there are many people that spend the whole day in the pub playing cards or showing off.

George: Today, yes, but after the revolution it won't be like that any longer, and I'll tell you why. Today work is heavy, badly paid and scorned by all. Whoever works today has to wear himself out, go hungry and be treated like a beast. The working man has no hope, and knows he'll end up in hospital or even in prison. He can't care for his family as he'd like to. He gets no enjoyment out of life and suffers continual ill treatment and humiliation. Those who don't work, on the other hand, and get others to work for them, enjoy all possible ease and are highly esteemed. It even happens among the workers themselves that those who do the lighter cleaner jobs and earn more money are more highly thought of. What wonder then that people work against their will and try to avoid it as much as they can?

But when work is done in humane, hygienic conditions with the help of machines, and the worker knows he's working for his own good and that of his dear ones and the whole community, when it is the indispensable condition for being esteemed in society and idleness is scorned just as spies and pimps are scorned today. Who then would give up the joy of knowing himself to be loved in order to live in idleness? Even today, apart from a few rare exceptions, everybody feels indescribable repugnance for the profession of spy or pimp. Yet in these abject trades, where little or no work is involved and where more or less direct protection is given by the authorities, more money can be earned than in tilling the soil! But these are vile occupations because they are a sign of profound moral degradation and only produce suffering and evil: and almost everyone prefers poverty to shame. There are obviously exceptions, there are weak and corrupt men who prefer baseness, but it's always a question of choosing between shame and poverty. But who would ever choose a vile tormented life if by working he would be sure of wellbeing and the esteem of one's fellows? If it did happen, it would be quite contrary to man's normal character and would be considered and treated as a case of madness.

And have no doubt about it. Public resistance to idleness certainly wouldn't be lacking, because work is the basic need of every society. A lazy person would not only harm everybody by living off others' produce without contributing to it, but would break the harmony of the new society and be one of a few discontented people who might desire a return to the past. Collectivities are like individuals: they love and honour whoever is, or they believe to be, useful. They can make mistakes, but in our case error isn't possible because it's all too clear that whoever doesn't work is eating and drinking at the expense of others.

Try the test of joining with others to do a job of work and divide the product into equal parts. You'd make allowances for the weak and inca-

pable, but for the unwilling you'd make life so hard they'd either leave you or decide to work. This is what would happen in society as a whole if the indifference of a few was able to cause noticeable damage.

And then, when everything was held up because of those who didn't want to work, the remedy would be easily found. They'd be expelled from the community and reduced to having only the right to raw materials and tools, so they'd have to work if they wanted to survive.

Bert: You're beginning to convince me ...but tell me, would everybody have to work the land then?

George: Why? We don't only need bread, wine and meat. We need housing, clothes, roads, books, in fact everything that the workers of all trades produce. And no one can provide everything he needs alone. Apart from working the soil, isn't there a need for the smith to make the tools, the miner to mine the iron, the builder to build the house and barns and so on? So it's not a question of everybody working the land, but of everybody working to do something useful.

The variety of occupations would make it possible for each person to choose what best suited his inclinations and so, at least as far as possible, work would become a form of exercise, a much desired recreation.

Bert: So each person would be free to choose the job he wanted?

George: Yes, but taking care that there are not too many people working in one kind of job, and scarcity in others. Because the work is done in the interests of all it must be done in such a way that all needs are catered for, reconciling as far as possible the general interest with individual preference. You'd see that each would do for the best when they were no longer bosses making us work for a few crumbs.

Bert: You say everybody would make an effort, but I think that nobody would want to do the heavy jobs, they'd all want to become lawyers and doctors. Who'd till the land then? Who'd want to risk their health and life down the mines? Who'd want to get dirty in sewers and manure?

George: As far as lawyers are concerned, let's leave them aside. They are gangrene like the priests. The social revolution would get rid of them completely. Let's speak of useful work and not that done to harm one's neighbour. Even the street assassin, who often has to put up with great suffering, becomes a worker too if we don't.

Today we prefer one job to another, not because it's more or less suited to our faculties or corresponds more to what we want to do, but because it is easier for us to learn, we can earn more money doing it, and only secondly because the work is lighter than another kind. Especially when the choice is imposed from birth by chance and social prejudice.

For instance, no town dweller would stoop to till the soil, not even the poor among them. Yet there's nothing inherently repulsive about agriculture, and life in the fields is not devoid of pleasure.

On the contrary, if you read the poets you'll find they're full of enthusiasm for rural life. But the truth is that poets, who publish books, have never tilled the soil, and those who really till it kill themselves with fatigue, die of hunger, live worse than beasts and are considered worthless people, so much so that the last city tramp would consider it an offense to be referred to as a peasant. How do you want people to work the land willingly? We ourselves, who were born here, stop as soon as we can, because we are better off and more highly thought of no matter what else we do. But who of us would leave the fields if we worked for ourselves and found in working the land wellbeing, freedom and respect?

It would be the same for all trades. The way things are today, the more a job is necessary the worse it is paid, the more tiring and inhuman the conditions, and the more it is treated with disdain. For instance, go into a goldsmith's workshop and you'll find that at least compared to the disgusting hovels we live in, the place is clean, well aired and heated in winter. The working day is not excessively long and the workers are reasonably well paid. The evenings are then spent relaxing, when they have taken off their working clothes they can go where they like without people staring at them and making a fool of them. On the other hand, go down a mine, you will see poor people working underground in pestilent air, consuming their lives in a few years for a derisory wage. And then, if after work the miner dared to frequent the same places as the gentry, he'd be lucky to get away with being mocked. Why should we be surprised then if someone prefers to be a goldsmith to a miner?

Not to mention those who know no tools but the pen. Think of it! someone who possibly knows nothing but puns and sugary sonnets earns ten times more than a farm worker and is considered to be above every honest labourer.

Journalists, for example, work in elegant offices, cobblers in filthy basements; engineers, doctors, artists, and teachers, when they have work and know their job well, live the life of the gentry while builders, nurses, artisans, and you could also add general practitioners and primary teachers, are going hungry and even killing themselves through overwork. Be careful, by this I don't mean that only manual labour is useful. On the contrary, study gives man the way to win over nature and civilise himself and gain more freedom and well-being, and the doctors, engineers, chemists and schoolmasters are just as useful and necessary to human society as farm workers and other workers. I'm just saying that all useful jobs should be appreciated equally and be carried out in

such a way that the workers feel equal satisfaction in doing them, and that intellectual work, which is in itself a great pleasure and gives man great superiority over whoever doesn't work with his mind and remains ignorant, must be accessible to all and not the privilege of a few.

Bert: But if you yourself say that working with the mind is a great pleasure and gives advantage over those who are ignorant, obviously everyone would want to study, and I'd be the first. So who'd do the manual work then?

George: Everyone. Because everyone, at the same time as they cultivate letters and science, should do some manual work; everyone should work with their heads and their hands. Those two kinds of work, far from prejudicing each other, help each other because for a man to be healthy he needs to exercise all his organs, the brain as well as the muscles. Whoever has a developed intelligence and is used to thinking, also gets on better in manual work; and whoever is healthy, as one is when one exercises one's strength in hygienic conditions, also has a more agile and penetrating mind.

Moreover, because the two kinds of work are necessary, and one is more pleasant than the other and is the road to awareness and dignity, it's not right for some to be condemned to exclusively manual work, leaving others the privilege of science, and therefore of command. So I repeat, everybody should do some manual and some intellectual work.

Bert: I can understand that, but there is manual work that is hard and manual work that is easy, some is unpleasant, some pleasant. Now who would be a miner, for instance, or a scavenger?

George: My dear Bert, if only you knew what inventions and research are going on every day, you'd see that even now, if the organisation of work didn't depend upon people who are not working themselves and so don't care about the comfort of the workers, all manual labour could be carried out under decent conditions. So there would always be some workers who preferred them. And that is today. Just think what it'll be when, everybody having to work, the efforts and study of all are directed towards making work lighter and more pleasant!

And even if some jobs persisted in being harder than others, one would try to compensate the differences through special advantages. And we must take into account that when everyone is working together for the common good, a spirit of brotherhood and compliance is born, just like in a family, where each individual tries to take the heaviest jobs upon himself.

Bert: You're right. But if all this doesn't come about, what'll we do?

George: Well, if in spite of everything some necessary work remained undone and no one wanted to do it of their own free will, then we'd all do

it, a bit each one, working for example one day a month, or a week out of every year, or some other way. And if something is really necessary for everyone, don't worry, a way to get it done will always be found. Don't we become soldiers today for the pleasure of others and don't we go and fight against other people whom we don't know and who've done us no harm, or against our own brothers and friends?

It would be better, it seems to me, to do work for our own pleasure and for the good of everyone.

Bert: Do you know, you're beginning to convince me? But there's something that I still can't get the hang of. That business about taking everything from the gentry? I don't know but...couldn't we avoid that?

George: And how would you like to do it? So long as the landowners have everything in hand it'll be they who command and look after their own interests without caring about us just as they've done since time began. But then, why shouldn't we take everything from the landowners? Maybe you think it would be unfair, an evil deed?

Bert: No. Really, after all you've told me, it seems to me rather that it would be a blessing, because if we took property from the landlords we'd be taking back our blood that they've been sucking for so long... And then, if we take it from them, it's not to take it for ourselves. It's to put it in common for the good of everyone, isn't it?

George: Of course. In fact, if you really think about it you'll see that the landowners themselves would benefit by it. Certainly, they'd have to give up commanding, being arrogant and lazy. They'd have to work, but the work, when done with the help of machines and taking great care of the workers' well-being, would be reduced to a light, pleasant exercise. Don't they go hunting? Don't they run, do gymnastics and so many exercises demonstrating that muscular work is a necessity and a pleasure for all healthy well-fed men? So, it's a question of doing for production the work that they do today as a pastime. And how many advantages would the same gentlemen feel from the general wellbeing and improved civilisation! Look in our own village for instance: the few landowners there are are rich and act like little princes. But at the same time the roads are just as ugly and dirty for them as they are for us. The foul air from our houses and neighbouring swamps affects them too. Our ignorance is such that they are also brutalised. How could they improve the countryside, make roads and light them, with their private wealth? How can they avoid the adulteration of consumer goods? How can they benefit from all the progress of science and industry? All things that when done through the collaboration of all would be quite simple. And their very vanity, how can it be satisfied when their society is shrinking?

And all this without taking into account the constant danger of gunshots from behind a barricade and the fear of a revolution, the thought of a disaster which would reduce them to poverty and expose their families to hunger, crime or prostitution as ours are? By taking property from those who own it, not only are we giving them their due, we're also doing them a great favour.

It's true that the landlords don't understand nor ever will, because they want to command, and that they believe that the poor are made of different stock. But what can we do? If they don't want to get on with good people, so much the worse for them: we shall get on with the bad.

Bert: That's all very well. But it wouldn't be easy to make it happen. Couldn't things be done gradually? Let's leave the land to those who have it, on condition that they increase wages and treat us like human beings. Then we could gradually save up and buy a piece of land too, and then when we are all landowners we can put everything in common as you say. I once heard a fellow suggesting something like that.

George: Listen: there's only one way to put things right, and that's to persuade the landlords to give up their land, because when someone gives something there's no need to use force. But there's no chance of that happening, you know that as well as I do.

For as long as private property exists, as long as the land and everything else belongs to this or that person instead of belonging to everybody, there will always be poverty, in fact things will go from bad to worse. With private property each one tries to draw the water to his own mill, and the landowners don't only try to give the workers as little as possible, they are always fighting among themselves. Generally speaking each one tries to sell his goods for as much as he can get and buy for as little as possible. So what happens? As the landowners, manufacturers and large merchants, can produce and buy goods wholesale, provide themselves with machines and take advantage of favourable market conditions and wait for the right moment to sell, or even sell at a loss for a time, they end up ruining the weaker proprietors and shopkeepers. The latter gradually sink into poverty and they or their children are forced to do casual labour (this is something we see every day). In this way, the men who work alone or with a few journeymen in small workshops are obliged, after a bitter struggle, to shut shop and go to look for work in the big factories. The small proprietors, who cannot even manage to pay their taxes, must sell their houses and fields to the large proprietors and so on. In this way, even if some good-hearted employer wanted to improve his workers' conditions, he'd only be ruined by competition and would most certainly go bankrupt.

On the other hand the workers, driven by hunger, must compete against each other, and as there are more hands available than demands for work (not because there isn't work that needs doing, but because the bosses only employ the number of men that suits them), so they have to snatch the bread from each other's mouths, and no matter how little you are prepared to work for, there will always be someone willing to work for less.

In this way, every step towards progress becomes a disaster. A new machine is invented: right away large numbers of workers are put out of work, stop earning, cannot consume and therefore indirectly also take work away from others. In America wide expanses of land are cultivated and much grain is produced. The landowners send their grain to Europe to get a higher price for it, without caring whether the people in America have enough to eat. Here the grain costs less, but the poor are worse off instead of better, because the European landlords stop cultivating the land as the price of grain is so low it's no longer worth it; or they cultivate only a small part of it where the earth is most fertile, so a large number of peasants are put out of work. Bread is cheap, that's true, but the poor people don't even earn the little necessary to buy it.

Bert: Ah! now I see. I've heard that they didn't want grain from abroad, and it seemed criminal to refuse God's blessing in that way. I thought the landlords wanted to starve the people, but now I see they had a good reason for what they were saying.

George: No, no, because if grain doesn't arrive it's bad from another point of view. The landlords then, not fearing competition from outside, sell the stuff when it pleases them and…

Bert: So?

George: So? I've already said: everything should be put in common for the good of everyone. Then, the more there is the better off we'll be. If new machines are invented or production increases, or less work is done, or whatever, it is always so much gained for everyone, and if they had too much grain in one village for instance and sent some to us, we'd send them some of what we produce. So everyone would gain something.

Bert: But…if we shared things with the landlords? If they contributed the land and capital and we did the work, then we'd share the produce. What do you think?

George: First, although you would be willing to share, your employer certainly wouldn't. It would be necessary to use force, and as much would be needed to make them share as to make them give everything up. So why do things by half and be satisfied with a system which allows injustice and parasitism to continue, and which blocks production?

Then I ask, what right have a few men to take half of what the workers produce without doing any work themselves?

Besides, as I've already said, not only would half the produce go to the landlords, but the total product would be of a far inferior quality than what would be achieved if the work was done in common and

guided by the common interest of the producers and consumers. It's like trying to move a boulder: one hundred men try one after the other and don't get anywhere, nor would they if all tried together but each pulled for his own gain and tried to counteract the others' efforts. On the other hand three or four people combining efforts and using levers and other suitable tools would lift it up easily. If you set out to make a pin, who knows whether you'll finish it within the hour, whereas ten men working together could make thousands and thousands of pins per day. And as time goes on and more machines are invented more work will be done in common if progress is to be enjoyed.

While we're on the subject, I want to answer an objection that has often been made.

Economists (who put together in the name of science a lot of nonsense and lies to demonstrate that the gentry have the right to live off the sweat of others), and all the learned people with full stomachs often say that it's not true that poverty is caused by the bosses taking everything for themselves, but that production is limited and there's not enough to go round. They end up saying that no one is responsible for poverty, so there's no point in rebelling against it. The priest keeps you docile and subjected, telling you everything is God's will; the economists say it's the law of nature. But don't believe a word of it. Of course it's true that what industry and agriculture produce today isn't enough to supply everyone with the good food and comfort enjoyed by only a few. But this is because of the present system, where the bosses aren't concerned with the general interest and only produce when and what suits them, often destroying goods to keep prices up. In fact, at the same time as they're saying there's a shortage, they leave extensive land uncultivated and many labourers out of work.

But then they reply that even if all the land were cultivated and everyone worked using the best known methods, poverty would return all the same because the productivity of the land is limited. People would be in a condition to have more children so the production of foodstuffs would remain stationary, while the population would continue to grow indefinitely, and scarcity with it. So, they say, the only remedy for social ills is for the poor not to have children, or at least only have a few that they can bring up reasonably well.

So much could be said on the problem of the far distant future. There are those who maintain, and with good reason, that the increase in population finds a natural limit, without requiring artificial brakes, voluntary or otherwise. It seems that with racial development the heightening of intellectual faculties, the emancipation of woman and the increase in general wellbeing, the generative need gradually diminishes. But these are questions that are of no practical importance today, and are not related to the present cause of poverty.

Today it is not a question of population but of social organization. And the remedy of not having children would not cure anything. We see that in countries where there is much land and a sparse population, there is as much poverty as there is in the densely populated countries, often far more. In spite of all the obstacles deriving from private ownership, production grows more rapidly today than the population and the worsening of poverty is caused by overproduction in relation to the poor's means for consumption. The workers are unemployed because the warehouses are full of goods that have been produced and have not found buyers. Cultivated land is left to grow wild because there is too much grain. Prices are falling and the landlords are no longer finding it profitable to sow crops, caring nothing that the peasants are out of work and hungry.

So, first we need to change the social organization, cultivate all the land, organize production and consumption in the interest of all, leaving free reign to new methods and innovations, occupy all the immense part of the world that is still uninhabited. Then, when in spite of all the previsions the population is really seen to be too great, and only then, will it be the case for the people living in that moment to think of imposing a limit on their procreation. But this limitation should be observed by everyone, with no exception for a restricted number of people who, not content with living in abundance through the work of others, would like the exclusive right to have unlimited children. Moreover, for as long as there are poor people limits can never be imposed on procreation because they cannot think about the general scarcity of goods when they have the most immediate cause of poverty before their eyes: the boss taking the lion's share. The poorer one is, the more uncertain one is of tomorrow, and naturally the more short-sighted and uncaring. Only when everyone would suffer equally from a food shortage could a voluntarily imposed limit succeed, which no human power could impose by force.

But let us go back to the question of the division of the product between owner and worker. What would you give to those who are not

working? The bosses, for as long as they remain such, cannot be forced to employ people they don't need.

The system of division, called *participation* or *metayage* (crop sharing system), once existed for work in the fields in many parts of southern Europe, and still exists today in some parts of Italy such as Tuscany. But this is gradually disappearing and will also disappear in Tuscany because the landlords find it more profitable to use casual labour. Today then, with machines, scientific agriculture and imports, it has become a real necessity for landowners to employ labour, and those who do not get there in time will be reduced to poverty through competition.

Finally, if we carry on with the present system we'll end up with property still in the hands of a few, and the labourer thrown into the gutter as a result of machines and accelerated production methods. In this way we'll have a few large landowning bosses in the world, with a few workers for the servicing of the machinery, then domestic servants and police serving to defend the landlords. The masses will either die of hunger or live off charity. We can see already. The small proprietor is disappearing, the number of unemployed workers is increasing and the landlords, through fear or pity for all those people who might die of hunger, are organizing soup kitchens and other works of charity.

If people don't want to be reduced to begging a plate of soup from the landlords' doors or from the municipality as they've done in the past at the doors of convents, there is only one way: to take possession of the land and machinery, and work for themselves.[1]

Bert: But if the government made new laws forcing the landlords not to make the poor people suffer?

George: We're back in square one. The government is made up of landlords, and they would never make laws against themselves. And if the poor reach command, why do things by half and leave the landlords with

[1] This was written in 1883, when Marx's theory of the concentration of wealth in the hands of an increasingly small number of people had still not been discussed among socialists. Later studies corroborated by fresh facts have shown that there are other tendencies which counterbalance that towards the concentration of capital, and that in reality the number of proprietors sometimes decreases, sometimes increases. The workers' conditions worsen or improve due to a thousand factors which are continually changing or which react upon each other in various ways.

But these new assertions, far from invalidating the need for a radical transformation of the social regime, demonstrate that it would be pointless to wait for the bourgeois society to die by itself of the progressive worsening of the ills it produces, and that if the workers want to emancipate themselves and establish a society of well-being and freedom for all, they must expropriate in a revolutionary way the exploiters of other people's work, few or many as they may be.

(Author's note 1913)

enough in hand as to allow them to dominate us again? Because, you see, wherever there are rich and poor, the poor can shout for a while, at a time of rebellion. But then it is always the rich who end up commanding. So, if for a moment we manage to be the strongest, we must take the property from the rich right away, and in such a way that they won't be able to put things back like before.

Bert: I understand everything. We must make a good republic. Everybody equal, and whoever works eats and who doesn't work goes hungry...Ah! I'm sorry I'm old. Lucky you youngsters who will see these great times.

George: Take it easy my friend. By *republic* you mean social revolution, and so to someone who knows what you're talking about, you'd be quite right. But you're expressing yourself badly, because republic doesn't actually mean anything like what you have in mind. Get it well into your head that a republic is a government just like what there is now, only instead of there being a king there's a president and ministers who have the same powers. The king removed, the government is still called a republic, even if the inquisition, torture or slavery still exist! If you want a republic as they say they do in Italy, you will have to add the following changes: instead of two chambers, there would only be one, the deputies, and instead of the vote being only for those who have money or can read and write, would be for everyone.

And there's nothing more to it you know, because all the rest, such as putting an end to military service, or lowering taxes, or providing schools, or protecting the poor, are all promises that will be kept... if it suits the landlord deputies. And when it comes to promising we don't need republicans, because already now when candidates need to be elected they promise heaven and earth and then, after they are elected, no more is said on the subject.

However, that's all nonsense. So long as there are rich and poor, the rich will always command. Whether there is a republic or a monarchy, the consequences deriving from private property will always be the same. Competition regulates all economic relations, therefore property is concentrated in a few hands, machines take the place of workers, and the masses will be reduced, as we have said, to dying of hunger or living off charity.

We can see that now. There have been republics and many still exist, and they have never improved the conditions of the people.

Bert: Well I'm blowed! And I thought that the republic meant that everybody would be equal!

George: That's what the republicans say, and their argument is that the members of parliament who make the laws are elected by the people,

so when the people are not happy, they send better M.P.s and everything gets sorted out; in fact the poor are the great majority, and in the last analysis it is they who command. But the truth is quite different. The poor, who precisely because they are poor are also ignorant and suspicious, vote as the priests and bosses want them to, and will continue to do so as long as they don't have economic independence and a clear awareness of their interests.

You and I, if we had had the extraordinary good luck of earning more and were able to study a little, might be able to understand what our own interests are and have the strength to face the landlords' vengeance. But the great mass will never be able to do so as long as present conditions continue. No, facing the ballot box is not the same as a revolution, where one brave and intelligent man is worth a hundred timid ones, and draws along behind him so many who alone would never have had the energy to rebel. In the face of the ballot box what counts is number, and so long as there are priests, landlords and governments, the number will always be for the priests, who dispense hell and paradise, for the landlords, who give and take bread as they please, and for the government who have policemen to intimidate and employment to corrupt. And don't you know? Today the majority of the electors are poor, yet what do they do when they have to vote? Do they nominate the poor, who know them and want to defend their interests?

Bert: What! they ask the landlord who they are to vote for and do what he says. On the other hand, if they didn't, they'd be sacked.

George: So you see. What do you want to know about universal suffrage then? The people will send the landlords to parliament, and once they're there they know to act so as to keep the people ignorant and enslaved as they are now. And when they see they're not succeeding with the republic, they have everything in hand to send it crashing headlong.

So there's only one way: to expropriate the landlords and give everything to the people. When the people see that everything belongs to them, and they're responsible for their own wellbeing, then they'll know how to enjoy the land, and will also know how to look after it.

Bert: I believe that! But by republic the peasants don't mean what you're saying it is. In fact, now I understand that what we call republic is the same as what you call anarchy. But couldn't we call it republic instead? What does the name matter! The main thing is that things be done as they should be.

George: You're right. But there's one great danger. If the people continue to believe that the republic is good for them, when the day comes that they can't take any more and start the revolution, the republicans will content them right away by proclaiming the republic and saying

that now they can go home and start nominating M.P.s, because soon everything will be under control.

The people, credulous as always, will abandon their guns and give vent to music and merrymaking. Meanwhile the landlords will all become republicans, they will all be heartily for the people, lash out money and organize great festivities. They'll pay the workers a little more, and get themselves put in power. Then they'll let the storm calm down gradually and prepare the forces to keep a brake on the people, who will one day realise that they spilt their blood for others, and that they are worse off than before.

Instead, as it rarely happens that the people rebel and come out victorious, they must take the first opportunity and apply communism right away and not listen to promises. Take possession of property directly, occupying the houses, the land and the factories. And whoever speaks of republic should be treated as an enemy, otherwise the same thing will happen as happened in '59 and '60.

Words don't seem to matter, but it's always with words that the people have been deceived and taken for a ride!

Bert: You're right. We've been sacrificed so often, and now it's time we opened our eyes.

But there will always be a need for a government. How would we get on with nobody in command?

George: Why must we take orders? Why can't we manage our own affairs?

Whoever gives orders always does what he wants, and always, either through ignorance or villainy, betrays the people. Power goes to people's heads, even among the best. Besides, we must stop being sheep. The best reason for not wanting to take orders is that people must begin to think and learn to recognise their own dignity and strength. The command of a few educates others to obedience. And even if there was such a thing as a good government, it would be more corrupting and weakening than a bad one: a coup d'etat would be easier than ever, destroying the improvements that had been achieved and re-establishing privilege and tyranny. For people to become educated to freedom and the management of their own interests, they must be left to act for themselves, to feel responsibility for their actions in the good or bad which comes from them. They'd make many mistakes, but they'd understand from the consequences where they'd gone wrong and try out new ways. The harm a people can do themselves when left to their own resources is only a thousandth part of what the most benign government can do. For a child to learn to walk he must be left to it and not be afraid of a few bumps or falls.

Bert: Yes, but for a child to be put down to walk he must already have a certain amount of strength in his legs, or stay in his mother's arms.

George: That's true. But governments are not in the least like mothers, and they'll never improve and strengthen the people. In fact social progress is nearly always achieved against, or in spite of, governments. The latter increasingly translate the needs and will of the masses into law, so breaking them through the spirit of dominion or monopoly. Some peoples are more advanced than others, but no matter what stage of civilisation they're at, even in the primitive state, people would always realise their interests better than any government they produced.

You believe what seems to be the case: that the government is made up of the most intelligent and capable men, but that's not in fact true. They are usually composed either directly or by delegation, of those who have most money. But even if it were so that the government was composed of intelligent people? If those of a higher capacity stay among the people, they use it to the people's advantage. If they go into government, they no longer feel the people's needs and are drawn into looking after those interests created by politics, the desire to hold on to power rather than look to the real needs of society. They are corrupted by lack of competition and control, often distracted from the field of activity in which they are really competent to dictate laws over things they had no interest in at first. Even the best and most intelligent end up believing in a higher nature, and form a caste who only look after the people as far as is necessary to exploit them and hold them down.

It would therefore be better and surer if we were to look after our own interests, starting from where we live and the jobs we know best, then gradually getting into agreement with all the other trades and areas, not only in Italy but all over the world. Men are all brothers, and have an interest in loving each other and helping each other. Don't you think so?

Bert: Yes, I'm beginning to think you're right. But the criminals, the thieves, the vandals? What would happen to them?

George: First of all, when there is no longer poverty and ignorance there won't be all those hooligans any more. But even supposing there were still some, is that a reason for having a government and a police force? Wouldn't we be capable of putting those who don't respect others in their place? We wouldn't torture them as is done now both with the guilty and the innocent, but we'd put them in a position of not being able to do any damage, and do everything to put them back on the right road.

Bert: So, when there is anarchy, everyone will be happy and contented, there will be no more poverty, hatred, jealousy, prostitution, wars or injustice?

George: I don't know how far human happiness can go. But I'm convinced that we shall all be as well off as possible and will continually try to improve and go forward. And the improvements will no longer be as they are today, to the advantage of a few and the detriment of many, but will be for the good of all.

Bert: I wish it were so! But when will this be? I'm old and now that I know that the world won't always be like this, I don't want to die without having seen at least one day of justice.

George: When will it be? How do I know? It's up to us. The more we do to open people's eyes, the sooner it will be done.

A good step has already been made. Whereas years ago the few who preached socialism were treated as ignorant, mad or ruffians, today the idea is known to many, and the poor, who once suffered in silence or rebelled when they were pushed to by hunger, but without knowing the why or wherefore of their ills, were killed or made to kill each other for the landlords. Today there is agitation all over the world. People rebel with the idea of getting rid of bosses and governments and count only on their own strength, having finally begun to understand that all the parties that the landlords are divided into are equally their enemies.

Let us bring propaganda into action now that the moment is ripe, and draw close together, those of us who have understood the problem. We shall kindle the fire that is smouldering among the masses, take advantage of the discontent, the movements, the revolts, and strike a vigorous blow. We are not afraid, and soon the bourgeois catastrophe will go up in smoke and the reign of wellbeing begin.

Bert: That's fine, but let's be careful not to reckon without our host. It's easy to say take the land from the landlords, but there are the carabinieri, the police, the soldiers. And now that I think of it, I'm afraid that their handcuffs, swords and guns are made, more than anything else, for precisely that: to defend the landlords.

George: We know that, my dear Bert. The police and army are there to keep a brake on the people and assure the landowners' tranquility. But if they have guns and cannons, there's no reason why we have to fight empty-handed. We know how to use guns too, and can get hold of them with astuteness and courage. Then there is the powder, the dynamite and all the explosive materials, the incendiary materials and a thousand tools which if in the hands of the government serve to hold the people in slavery, in the hands of the people will serve to conquer freedom. Barricades, mines, bombs, fire, are the means with which we resist armies, and we'll not need to be pressed to use them. It is well known: the revolution can hardly be achieved with holy water and the litany.

On the other hand, if you consider that the poor are the immense majority, and if they manage to understand and taste the advantages of socialism, there will be no force in the world strong enough to make them stay as they are. The poor are those who work and produce everything, and if only a considerable part of them were to suspend work there would be such a breakdown, such a panic, that the revolution would immediately impose itself as the only possible solution. Think too that the soldiers usually come from the poor, forced to become the pigs and executioners of their brothers, and no sooner will they see and understand what is happening than they'll sympathize, first secretly, then openly with the people and you'd persuade them that the revolution is not as difficult as it might seem at first sight.

The essential thing is to remember that the revolution is necessary, always to be ready to carry it out, and to be continually preparing it... And don't doubt that the occasion, spontaneous or provoked, won't fail to present itself.

Bert: You say this, and I believe you're right. But there are also those who say that the revolution is no use, and that things mature by themselves. What do you think?

George: You should know that from the moment socialism has gained strength the *bourgeoisie*, that is the landlords, have really begun to be afraid and are trying everything in order to avert the storm and deceive the people. Now they are all socialists, even the emperors ...and you can imagine what kind of socialism they've put together. Alas, some traitors have emerged from among our own comrades, lured by the flattery of the bourgeoisie in order to attract them, and by advantages they could gain through abandoning the revolutionary cause. They put themselves to preaching legal methods, elections, alliances with the parties—which they say are kindred—and so they get themselves a place amidst the bourgeoisie and treat those who want revolution as mad or worse. Many continue to say that they too want revolution, but, in the meanwhile... they want to be nominated member of parliament.

When someone tells you that the revolution is not necessary, speaks to you of voting for parties or local councillors, or agreeing with whatever faction of the bourgeoisie, if he is one of your comrades who works like you, try to persuade him of his mistake. If on the contrary he is a bourgeois or someone who wants to find the way to becoming bourgeois, consider him an enemy and carry on your own way.

Well, that's enough for the time being. We can talk more about these problems some other time. Goodbye.

Bert: Goodbye; and I'm glad you've helped me to understand many things which, now you've told me, I can't understand why I didn't think of them before. Goodbye.

Bert: Wait! While we're here, just so as not to part with a dry throat, let's go for a drink, and at the same time I'll ask you a few more things.

I understand all you've told me... and I'll think about it on my own and try to convince myself more. But you mentioned hardly any of these difficult words that I usually hear said when such things are being discussed and which confuse me because I don't understand them. For instance, I've heard you're *communists, socialists, internationalists, collectivists, anarchists*, and goodness knows what. Can you tell me exactly what those words mean and what you really are?

George: Ah! Right, you did well to ask me this, because words are necessary in order to agree and distinguish oneself from others, but when they're not fully understood they can give rise to great confusion.

You should know then that *socialists* are those who believe that poverty is the main cause of all social evil, and that until poverty is destroyed there will be no way to destroy either ignorance, slavery, political inequality, prostitution or any of the evils that hold the people down in such a horrible state, and which are nothing compared to poverty itself. Socialists believe that poverty depends on the fact that the land and all the raw materials, machines and all the tools of work belong to a few individuals who thereby regulate the lives and deaths of all the working class and find themselves in a continual state of struggle and competition, not only against the *proletarians*, that is those who have nothing, but also amongst themselves, snatching property from each other. Socialists believe that through abolishing individual property, in other words the cause, poverty, which is the effect, would be abolished at the same time. And this property can and must be abolished, because production and distribution must be done according to people's interests, without any respect for so-called inheritance, the privilege the landlords now pride themselves in with the excuse that their ancestors were stronger, or more fortunate, or more cunning, or even more laborious or more virtuous than the others.

So, you see, *socialists* are all those who want social wealth to serve all men and want no more owners or proletarians, rich or poor, employers or employed.

Once this was something that was understood, and it was enough to say that one was a *socialist* to be persecuted and hated by the landlords who would rather there were a million murderers at large than only one socialist. But as I've already told you, when the landlords and those who want to become such see that in spite of all their persecution and slander,

socialism went forward and the people began to open their eyes, then they thought it was necessary to try to confuse the question in order to cheat them more successfully; and many of them began to say that they too were socialists, because they too wanted the good of the people, they too understood that it was necessary to destroy or reduce poverty. First they said that the social question, that is the question of poverty and all the other evils that derive from it, did not exist. Today, now that socialism scares them, they say that whoever studies given social problems is a socialist, almost as if one could call a doctor someone who studies illness, not with the intention of healing it, but of making it last.

So today you'll find people who call themselves socialists among the republicans, the royalists, the clergymen, the usurers, the judges, the police, in a word everyone, and their socialism consists of keeping people at bay, or of getting themselves nominated members of parliament making promises which they couldn't keep even if they wanted to.

Among those false socialists there are certainly some in good faith who really believe they're doing good; but so what? If someone, believing he's doing good starts beating you up, you'd first have to take the stick out of his hands, while his good intentions would at best serve to prevent him from having his head smashed in once the club had been taken away.

So, when someone tells you he's a socialist, ask him to take the property from those who have it to put it in common for all. If the answer is yes, embrace him as a brother, if it is no, be careful, because you have an enemy in front of you.

Bert: Therefore you are a socialist; I can see that. But what does communist or collectivist mean then?

George: The communists and collectivists are both socialists, but have different ideas about what should be done after property has been put in common, and I've already said something about that, remember. The collectivists say that every worker, or even better, every association of workers must have the raw materials and tools for working, and that each should own the product of his labour. So long as they live they spend it or keep it, do what they like with it, anything except use it to make others work for them. Then when they die, if they have saved anything, this goes back to the community. Their children naturally also have the means to work, and to allow them to inherit would be the first step towards going back to inequality and privilege. As far as learning is concerned, and the upkeep of children, old people and the sick, the roads, water supply, lighting and public hygiene–all those things that everyone needs- each workers' association would give so much to compensate the people who did these tasks.

The communists, on the other hand, go more for the quick road. They say: because to go ahead well men must consider themselves members of one large family, property must be in common. Because work in order to be productive and to benefit from machines must be done by the large workers' collectives. Because to benefit from all the varieties of soil and atmospheric conditions, in such a way that each place produces what is most fitting for it, and to avoid competition and hatred between the different countries and people rushing off to the richest places, it is necessary to establish perfect solidarity between all peoples of the world and because it would be the work of the devil to make out which part of a product was due to whom. Let's do one thing, instead of getting all mixed up trying to decide what you've done and what I've done, let's all work and put everything in common. That way *each would give to society all that their strength permitted until there was enough to go round for everyone; and each would take what they needed, limiting themselves of course in things that were scarce.*

Bert: Take it easy. First you must explain the meaning of the word *solidarity*, because you said there must be perfect *solidarity* between all men, and, to tell you the truth, I don't know what you mean.

George: Well, in your family for example, everything you and your brothers and sons earn, you put together. Then you buy food and you all eat. If there's not enough, then you all eat a bit less.

Then if you have some luck or manage to earn a bit more, it's good for everyone. If on the other hand somebody is out of work, he eats at the table along with everyone else, and if someone is ill there is more expense to be met. So it happens that in your family, instead of trying to take the bread from each other's mouths, you try to help each other because the wellbeing of one is the wellbeing of all, just as one's pain is the pain of all. This way hatred and envy cannot exist, and reciprocal affection develops which never exists in a family with divided interests.

This is called *solidarity*. It is something to be established among all men, this relationship that exists within a family where all the members really love each other.

Bert: I see. Now to get back to the first question, tell me, are you a *communist* or a *collectivist*?

George: I personally am a *communist*, because it seems to me that when one has to be friends, its not worth doing it in half measures. *Collectivism* still leaves the seeds of rivalry and hatred. But there's more to it than that. If each one could live on what he produced himself, *collectivism* would still be inferior to *communism*, because it would tend to keep people isolated and therefore diminish their strength and solidarity, but it could still work. But because, for example, the cobbler can't

eat shoes, the forger eat iron, nor can the farmer make all he needs himself or cultivate the land without the workers who mine the iron to make machinery, and so on, it would be necessary to organize exchange between the various producers, remembering what each had done. So the cobbler would claim as much as he could in exchange for a pair of shoes, and the farm worker, on his side, would give as little as possible. Who on earth would be able to make anything of it? *Collectivism*, it seems to me, would give rise to a lot of problems and would lend itself to cheating which in the long run could take us back to square one.

Communism, on the other hand, doesn't produce any such problems. Everyone works and everyone benefits by the work of all. It would only be necessary for each one to be satisfied, and act in such a way that enough be produced.

Bert: So in *communism* there would be no need for money?

George: Neither for money nor for anything else in the place of it. Nothing more than a register of goods requested and goods produced, to try to always keep production at the level of needs.

The only difficulty would arise if there were many people who didn't want to work, but I've already said how work, such a serious problem today, would become a pleasure and at the same time a moral obligation which only a madman would refuse to fulfil. And I also said that, if the worst came to the worst, if due to our bad education and the deprivation we've had to put up with before the new society was organized properly and production increased in proportion to new needs, if, I say, there were some who didn't want to work and there were enough of them to create difficulties, there would be nothing for it but to chase them out of the community, giving them the materials and tools to work on their own. That way, if they wanted to eat they'd set to work. But you'd see this wouldn't happen.

Moreover, what we want more than anything is to put the land in common, along with the raw materials, working tools, houses and all the wealth that exists today. As far as organizing is concerned then, and distribution of production, people will do what they want. It is only when one gets down to actually doing things that the best system is discovered. It is almost certain that communism will be established in some places, something else in others. And then gradually everyone will accept the system that is seen to work best.

The essential thing is, remember, that no one starts ordering others about or taking over the land and tools. It will be necessary to be careful about this and stop it if it should happen, even with arms. The rest will go by itself.

Bert: I got that too. Now tell me, what is *anarchy*?

George: *Anarchy* means no government. Didn't I tell you that government does nothing but defend the landlords, and that as far as our interests are concerned the best thing is to look after ourselves without anybody giving us orders? Instead of electing MPs and local councillors who go and make and unmake laws that oppress us, we'll look after our affairs ourselves and decide what to do about them. And when, to put our ideas into action, there is a need to put someone in charge of a project, we'll tell them to act in such and such a way and no other. If it's a question of things we don't know in advance, then we'll entrust the job to those who are capable of understanding, studying and making suggestions. In any case nothing would be done without our decision. So our delegates, instead of being individuals to whom we've given the right to order us about, would be people chosen specially: from among the most capable to deal with each single problem that may arise. They'd have no authority, only the duty to carry out what everyone involved wanted: for instance someone would be given the task of organising the schools, or planning a road, or seeing about the exchange of produce, in the same way as you might entrust a shoemaker to make you a pair of shoes.

This is *anarchy*. Besides that, if I wanted to explain it all to you, I'd have to talk about it as long as I've done about all the rest. We'll speak about it at length some other time.

Bert: That's fine, but in the meantime explain a little about it to me. What is it that you want? Now you've made me curious to know.

You must explain to me how on earth I, ignorant as I am, could ever understand all those things we call politics, and do by myself what all the ministers and members of parliament are doing.

George: But what are the ministers and members of parliament doing that is so good that you have to worry about not being able to do it? They make laws and organize the forces for repressing the people, guaranteeing the exploitation carried out by the bosses: that's all. We've no need for that science.

It's true that the ministers and M.P.s also do other things, which are good and necessary. But to get involved in something to manage it for the benefit of a given class of people or to obstruct its development with useless and repressive rules, isn't doing anything real. For example, these gentlemen interfere in the affairs of the railways; but in order to build and run a railway there's absolutely no need for them, just as there's no need for shareholders. The engineers, mechanics, workers and all categories of skills are all that are required, and they'll always be there, even when the ministers, M.P.s and other parasites have completely disappeared.

The same goes for the post, telephones, navigation, public instruction, and hospitals. These are all things that are carried out by workers of every kind, like post office workers, sailors, school teachers, doctors, and which the government comes into only to obstruct, break down and exploit.

Politics, as intended and carried out by the people of government, seem a difficult art to us, because they're concerned with things which, for we workers, are neither one thing nor the other, and because they've nothing to do with the real interests of the population and are only concerned with deceiving and dominating. If on the other hand it were a question of satisfying the needs of the people in the best possible way then things would be a lot more difficult for an M.P. than they'd be for us.

In fact, what do you expect M.P.s, who are always in parliament, to know about the needs of all the cities and towns of the country? How do you expect people who have wasted time studying Latin and Greek and continue to waste it with even more useless affairs, to understand the needs of the various trades? Things would be different if each one took care of the things he knew about, the needs he feels and shares.

The revolution achieved, it will be necessary to begin from the base and work to the top. The people divide themselves into communes, and in each commune there will be different trades which will immediately, through solidarity and the impulse of propaganda, constitute themselves into associations. Now, who knows more than you about the interests of your commune and your trade?

When then it's a question of more than one commune or trade reaching an agreement, the respective delegates would take their given mandates to the relative meetings and try to harmonise their various needs and desires. The deliberations would always be subject to the control and approval of those who delegated them, in such a way that there be no danger that the interest of the people be forgotten.

And so, gradually, one would go on to the agreement of the whole human race.

Bert: But if in a village or association people didn't all see things the same way, what would happen then? The greatest number would win wouldn't they?

George: By rights, no, because where truth and justice are concerned numbers don't count, and often one person alone can be right against one hundred or a hundred thousand. In practice one would do what one could; everything is done to reach unanimity, and when this is impossible, one would vote and do what= the majority wanted, or else put the decision in the hands of a third party who would act as arbitrator, re-

specting the inviolability of the principles of equality and justice which the society is based on.

Note though that the problems which couldn't be agreed upon without being put to a vote or an arbitrator would be few indeed and of little importance. There would no longer be the division of interests there are today, as each person would choose their own area and association. In other words they'd choose to be with the companions they got on with best, and it would always be a question of deciding on clear things, which could be easily understood and which belong rather to the positive field of science than to the changing one of opinions. And the more one went forward, the more the vote would become something useless and antiquated, in fact quite ridiculous because when, through experience, the best solution to a problem was found, the one which best satisfied the needs of all, then it would be a question of demonstrating and persuading, not crushing the adverse opinion with a numerical majority. For example, wouldn't it make us laugh today if the peasants were called to vote on which would be the best season to sow their grain, when this is something they already know from experience?

The same thing would happen with everything concerning public and private utility.

Bert: But if nonetheless there were some who for one reason or another were opposed to a decision made in the interest of all?

George: Then of course it would be necessary to take forcible action, because if it is unjust that the majority oppress the minority, it's no more just that the contrary should happen. And just as the minority have the right of insurrection, so do the majority have the right of defense, or if the word doesn't offend you, repression.

Don't forget though that everywhere and in all ways men have the inalienable right to raw materials and the tools of labour, so that they can always stay free and independent away from the others. It's true that it isn't a satisfactory solution, because the dissidents would be deprived of many social advantages which the isolated individual or group wouldn't be able to procure, and which require the combined efforts of the whole of a large collectivity... but what do you want? The dissidents themselves couldn't claim that the will of the many be sacrificed to that of the few.

Believe me: beyond solidarity, brotherhood, love; beyond mutual aid and, when necessary, mutual tolerance, there is nothing but tyranny and civil war. Be sure though that as tyranny and civil war are things which damage everyone, people, no sooner were they arbitrators of their own destiny, would move towards solidarity, where only our ideals can be realised and through them peace, wellbeing and universal freedom.

Note too that progress, while it tends to unite men, also tends to make them more independent and able to look after themselves. For example: today, to travel rapidly it is necessary to use the railway. This requires the concourse of a large number of people in order to build it and make it function so that each person is obliged, even in anarchy, to adapt themselves to the network, time-table and other rules that the majority think best. If though tomorrow a locomotive is invented that can be driven by one man alone on some kind of road without danger either to himself or others, then there will no longer be a need to pay attention to what others think, and each person could travel wherever he liked at the time he pleased.

And the same goes for a thousand other things that one can do now or that the means to be done will be found in the future, as one could say that the tendency of progress is towards a type of relationship between people that could be defined with the formula: *moral solidarity and material independence*.[2]

Bert: Very well. So you are a *socialist* and among socialists you are a *communist* and an *anarchist*. Why then do they call you an *Internationalist* as well?

George: The socialists have been called *internationalists* because the first great demonstration of modern socialism was the *International Working Men's Association*, which abbreviated became known as *The International*. This association, which began in 1864 with the aim of uniting the workers of all nations in the struggle for economic emancipation, had at the beginning a very indeterminate programme. Then in establishing itself it divided into various fractions and its most advanced part went as far as to formulate and advocate the principles of anarchist socialism which I have tried to explain to you.

[2] This forecast has already come true since the time this book was written. The motor car is already a means of traveling anywhere rapidly, without the need for a complicated organization, or the rigorous rules required for the running of the railways. And air navigation is already well under way, leaving greater independence to individuals and removing many of the inequalities caused today by the geographical positions of various localities.

Thus the invention of the electric engine with the possibility of carrying motor power anywhere and in any quantity, has resulted in the fact that the machine can also be used at home, and has to a large extent suppressed the need for large workshops with steam engines.

In the same way the wireless is tending to do away with the need for a complicated telegraph service. Progress in chemistry and farming techniques are enabling anything to be grown in any hind of soil, etc., etc.

(Author's note 1913)

Now this association is dead partly because it was persecuted and banished, partly because of the internal divisions and the differing opinions which contrasted the field. From this, though, was born the great workers' movement which agitates throughout the world, and the various socialist parties of different countries, and the *international socialist anarchist revolutionary party* which is now organizing itself in order to strike a mortal blow to the bourgeois world.

This party has the aim of propagating with all possible means the principles of anarchist socialism, combating every hope in the voluntary concessions of the bosses or the government or in gradual and pacific reforms, and re-awakening in the people the awareness of their rights and spirit of rebellion, urging them on to make the social revolution, that is to the destruction of political power, i.e. government, and putting all existing wealth in common.

Whoever accepts this programme and wants to fight with others to carry it out belongs to the party. The party has no leaders or authority of any kind, and is founded on spontaneous and voluntary agreement between those fighters for the same cause. Each individual preserves full freedom to build more intimate ties with whoever he thinks fit, to practice the means he prefers and to propagate his particular ideas, so long as he in no way goes against the general tactic of the party, in which case he could no longer be considered a member of the party itself.

Bert: So all those who accept socialist-anarchist-revolutionary principles are members of this party?

George: No, because one can be perfectly in agreement with our programme, but for one reason or another prefer to struggle alone or along with a few comrades, without contracting bonds of solidarity and effective cooperation with the mass of those who accept the programme. This can also be a good method for certain individuals and for certain immediate ends one seeks to attain; but it cannot be accepted as a general method; because isolation causes weakness and creates antipathy and rivalry where what is needed is brotherhood and agreement. In any case we always consider friends and comrades all those who in some way are fighting for the ideas that we are fighting for.

There can be those who are convinced of the truth of the idea and nonetheless stay at home, without involving themselves in propagating what they believe to be right. One cannot say they are not socialists and anarchists in idea, because they think like us: but it is certain that they must have little conviction and a listless soul because when one sees the terrible ills that afflict oneself and one's fellows and believes to know the remedy to put an end to these evils, how can one manage, if one has a heart, to remain inactive?

He who ignores the truth is not guilty; but he who knows it and acts as if he doesn't is a guilty man indeed.

Bert: You're right, and as soon as I've thought carefully about all you've said and I'm quite sure, I want to join the party and put myself to propagating these holy truths, and then if the landlords call me a rogue and a criminal too, I'll tell them to come and work and suffer like I do, and then they'll have the right to talk.

About Malatesta

Errico Malatesta has a special place amongst anarchist propagandists and theorists both for the remarkable lucidity and straightforwardness of his writings, and the practical aspect upon which his anarchism is founded. His importance also lies in the fact that he never fell into the trap of fatalism and over optimism that is all too evident in Kropotkin's anarchism. For Malatesta anarchism was not the philosophy for a future utopia that would one day happen, as if by magic, without any prior discussion or preparation. On the contrary, he was concerned throughout his life with practical ideas. His anarchism was something concrete, to be fought for and won, not in some distant future, but *here and now*.

* * *

Errico Malatesta was born in Capua near Naples in 1853. In his teens, while studying medicine at the University of Naples, he came under the influence of Mazzinian republicanism, and later, in 1871, partly through his enthusiasm for the Paris Commune and his friendship with Carmelo Palladino he joined the Naples section of the International Working Mens' Association. The following year he became acquainted with Bakunin and participated with him in the St Imer congress of the International.

Between 1872 and 1876, working closely with Bakunin, Cafiero and Costa, Malatesta helped spread Internationalist propaganda throughout Italy. For this he was imprisoned for 6 months in 1873 and again for a year between 1874 and 1875.

In April 1877 Malatesta, Cafiero, the Russian Stepniak and 30 other comrades began an insurrection in the province of Benevento. The armed group, with a large red and black flag at their head marched into the Matese mountains and soon took the village of Letino without a struggle where they were greeted with great enthusiasm. Arms and expropriated goods were distributed amongst the people, tax money was returned and official documents destroyed. The following day the village of Gallo was taken in similar fashion. Unfortunately, as they were leaving Gallo the Internationalists were surprised and surrounded by government troops and all were arrested. Held in prison for over

a year before being brought to trial all the accused were eventually acquitted.

After his acquittal Malatesta returned to Naples, but constant surveillance by the police forced him to leave Italy. From Naples he went to Egypt only to be expelled after a short time by the Italian Consul. Working his passage on a French ship he finally landed at Marseille after being systematically refused entry into Syria, Turkey and Italy. From Marseille he made his way to Geneva where he helped Kropotkin to produce *La Revolte*. Expelled from Switzerland Malatesta worked for a while in Romania before traveling to London, via France and Belgium, where he arrived towards the end of 1880. In London he worked as an ice-cream seller and later as a mechanic, a trade he was to return to several times in later life. While in London he participated in the 1881 congress of the International which gave birth to the Anarchist International.

Leaving London in 1882 Malatesta went to Egypt where he fought with the Egyptians against the British colonialists. The following year he returned clandestinely to Italy. Settling in Florence he founded the weekly *La Questione Sociale*, the first serious propagandist anarchist newspaper to be published in Italy. It was in *La Questione Sociale* that Malatesta's most popular and widely read pamphlet *Fra Contadini* appeared in 1884. That same year he was arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, and while waiting to serve his sentence he went to Naples and helped to nurse the victims of a cholera epidemic (as did many other anarchists and socialists).

Forced once again to flee Italy in order to avoid prison, Malatesta went to South America. From 1885 to 1889 he lived in Buenos Aires (apart from several trips to Montevideo) where he resumed the publication of *La Questione Sociale* and was instrumental in founding the Bakers Union, the first militant workers' union in Argentina.

Returning to Europe in 1889 he stayed for a while in Nice where he published a new newspaper *L'Associazione* before being forced to flee London. For the next 8 years he made London his base, making frequent clandestine trips to France, Switzerland and Italy, and undertaking two lecture tours of Spain with Tarrida del Marmol. While in London he wrote several important pamphlets including *In tempo di elezione* and *L'Anarchia*.

In 1897, thanks to an amnesty given to him by the Italian government Malatesta was able to return openly to Italy. Settling in Ancona he began a new newspaper *L'Agitazione*. The following year however he was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment followed by 5 years' banishment to a penal island. Taken first to the island of Ustica he was later transferred to Lampedusa from which he made a dramatic escape,

returning to London via Malta in 1899. That same year he spent several months in the USA, resuming the publication of *La Questione Sociale* in Paterson New Jersey. Later, while addressing a meeting in West Hoboten he was shot in the leg by an individualist anarchist who disagreed with him on his approach to organisation. From the USA Malatesta returned to London by way of Cuba.

Once in London again he resumed his trade of mechanic, running a small workshop in Islington. Between 1900 and 1913 he founded several newspapers, always in Italian, the most important of which were *Cause ed effetti* (1900), *L'Internazionale* (1900) and *La rivoluzione sociale* (1902). In 1907 he participated in the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam where he vigorously opposed Monatte on the question of revolutionary syndicalism. In 1912 Malatesta was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment and recommended for deportation for criminal libel. Only a massive public outcry prevented the latter sentence from being carried out.

In 1913 Malatesta returned to Italy where he published *Volonta* in Ancona until the outbreak of war in August 1914 forced him to return to London. While in Italy though he met the future Fascist dictator, Mussolini, then editor of the socialist paper *Avanti*.

The war years brought much confusion to the anarchist movement with prominent figures, notably Kropotkin and Grave, openly supporting the allies. Malatesta, as always remaining loyal to his anarchist ideals vigorously opposed the war and never ceased to denounce it. He was one of the signatories of the International Anarchist Manifesto against the war and responded to Kropotkin's position with such articles as *Pro-Government Anarchists* and *Have Anarchists Forgotten their Principles*.

In 1919 Malatesta returned for the last time to Italy, landing at Genoa where his arrival was greeted with great enthusiasm. At once he threw himself into the struggle. Settling in Milan he accepted the editorship of the newly founded daily *Umanita Nova* which soon had a circulation of 50,000. In July 1920 he participated in the second congress of the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* which enthusiastically adopted the programme he had written for it. The following month he supported the factory occupations in Turin and Milan. At the end of the year he was arrested together with 80 other militant anarchists and held in prison for almost a year before being brought to trial and acquitted.

On his release he moved to Rome and continued to edit *Umanita Nova* until it was forced to close down after Mussolini's 'March' on Rome (during which a portrait of Malatesta was burnt by the fascists in the Plaza Cavour).

With the closure of *Umanita Nova* Malatesta opened a small workshop undertaking mechanical repairs and electrical installations, but this was forced to close when the police started to molest his clients.

In 1924 he began to edit the bi-monthly review *Pensiero e Volonta* which contained some of his best writings until it was closed down in 1926 together with other anti-fascist publications.

At the end of 1926, after several months of police harassment, Malatesta was placed under house arrest. Virtually imprisoned in his flat, he still managed to contribute articles to the anarchist press mainly *Le Reveil* of Geneva and *L'Adunata dei refrattari* of New York. Early in 1932 he became ill with a respiratory complaint and died in July 1932 at the age of 79 years.

David Poole

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Anarchy

Errico Malatesta

1891

1

The word Anarchy comes from the Greek and its literal meaning is without government: the condition of a people who live without a constituted authority, without government.

Before such an organisation had begun to be considered both possible and desirable by a whole school of thinkers and accepted as the objective of a party, which has now become one of the most important factors in the social struggles of our time, the word anarchy was universally used in the sense of disorder and confusion; and it is to this day used in that sense by the uninformed as well as by political opponents with an interest in distorting the truth.

We will not enter into a philological discussion, since the question is historical and not philological. The common interpretation of the word recognises its true and etymological meaning; but it is a derivative of that meaning due to the prejudiced view that government was a necessary organ of social life, and that consequently a society without government would be at the mercy of disorder, and fluctuate between the unbridled arrogance of some, and the blind vengeance of others.

The existence of this prejudice and its influence on the public's definition of the word anarchy, is easily explained. Man, like all living beings, adapts and accustoms himself to the conditions under which he lives, and passes on acquired habits. Thus, having being born and bred in bondage, when the descendants of a long line of slaves started to think, they believed that slavery was an essential condition of life, and freedom seemed impossible to them. Similarly, workers who for centuries were obliged, and therefore accustomed, to depend for work, that is bread, on the goodwill of the master, and to see their lives always at the mercy of the owners of the land and of capital, ended by believing that it is the master who feeds them, and ingenuously ask one how would it be possible to live if there were no masters.

In the same way, someone whose legs had been bound from birth but had managed nevertheless to walk as best he could, might attribute his ability to move to those very bonds which in fact serve only to weaken and paralyse the muscular energy of his legs.

If to the normal effects of habit is then added the kind of education offered by the master, the priest, the teacher, etc., who have a vested interest in preaching that the masters and the government are necessary; if one were to add the judge and the policeman who are at pains to reduce to silence those who might think differently and be tempted to propagate their ideas, then it will not be difficult to understand how

the prejudiced view of the usefulness of, and the necessity for, the master and the government took root in the unsophisticated minds of the labouring masses.

Just imagine if the doctor were to expound to our fictional man with the bound legs a theory, cleverly illustrated with a thousand invented cases to prove that if his legs were freed he would be unable to walk and would not live, then that man would ferociously defend his bonds and consider as his enemy anyone who tried to remove them.

So, since it was thought that government was necessary and that without government there could only be disorder and confusion, it was natural and logical that anarchy, which means absence of government, should sound like absence of order.

Nor is the phenomenon without parallel in the history of words. In times and in countries where the people believed in the need for government by one man (monarchy), the word republic, which is government by many, was in fact used in the sense of disorder and confusion — and this meaning is still to be found in the popular language of almost all countries.

Change opinion, convince the public that government is not only unnecessary, but extremely harmful, and then the word anarchy, just because it means absence of government, will come to mean for everybody: natural order, unity of human needs and the interests of all, complete freedom within complete solidarity.

Those who say therefore that the anarchists have badly chosen their name because it is wrongly interpreted by the masses and lends itself to wrong interpretations, are mistaken. The error does not come from the word but from the thing; and the difficulties anarchists face in their propaganda do not depend on the name they have taken, but on the fact that their concept clashes with all the public's long established prejudices on the function of government, or the State as it is also called.

Before going on, it would be as well to make oneself clear on this word State, which in our opinion is the cause of the real misunderstanding.

Anarchists, including this writer, have used the word State, and still do, to mean the sum total of the political, legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions through which the management of their own affairs, the control over their personal behaviour, the responsibility for their personal safety, are taken away from the people and entrusted to others who, by usurpation or delegation, are vested with the powers to make the laws for everything and everybody, and to oblige the people to observe them, if need be, by the use of collective force.

In this sense the word State means government, or to put it another way, it is the impersonal abstract expression of that state of affairs, per-

sonified by government: and therefore the terms abolition of the State, Society without the State, etc., describe exactly the concept which anarchists seek to express, of the destruction of all political order based on authority, and the creation of a society of free and equal members based on a harmony of interests and the voluntary participation of everybody in carrying out social responsibilities.

But the word has many other meanings, some of which lend themselves to misunderstanding, especially when used with people whose unhappy social situation has not given them the opportunity to accustom themselves to the subtle distinctions of scientific language, or worse still, when the word is used with political opponents who are in bad faith and who want to create confusion and not understanding.

Thus the word State is often used to describe a special kind of society, a particular human collectivity gathered together in a particular territory and making up what is called a social unit irrespective of the way the members of the said collectivity are grouped or of the state of relations between them. It is also used simply as a synonym for society. And because of these meanings given to the word State, opponents believe, or rather they pretend to believe, that anarchists mean to abolish every social bond, all collective work, and to condemn all men to living in a state of isolation, which is worse than living in conditions of savagery.

The word State is also used to mean the supreme administration of a country: the central power as opposed to the provincial or communal authority. And for this reason others believe that anarchists want a simple territorial decentralisation with the governmental principle left intact, and they thus confuse anarchism with cantonalism and communalism.

Finally, State means the condition of being, a way of social life, etc. And therefore we say, for instance, that the economic state of the working class must be changed or that the anarchist state is the only social state based on the principle of solidarity, and other similar phrases which, coming from us who, in another context, talk of wanting to abolish the State can, at first hearing, seem fantastic or contradictory.

For these reasons we believe it would be better to use expressions such as abolition of the State as little as possible, substituting for it the clearer and more concrete term abolition of government.

Anyway, it is what we shall do in the course of this pamphlet.

2

We said that anarchy is society without government. But is the abolition of governments possible, desirable or foreseeable?

Let us see.

What is government? The metaphysical tendency[1] which in spite of the blows it has suffered at the hands of positive science still has a strong hold on the minds of people today, so much so that many look upon government as a moral institution with a number of given qualities of reason, justice, equity which are independent of the people who are in office. For them government, and in a more vague way, the State, is the abstract social power; it is the ever abstract representative of the general interest; it is the expression of the rights of all considered as the limits of the rights of each individual. And this way of conceiving of government is encouraged by the interested parties who are concerned that the principle of authority should be safeguarded and that it should always survive the shortcomings and the mistakes committed by those who follow one another in the exercise of power.

For us, government is made up of all the governors; and the governors — kings, presidents, ministers, deputies, etc. — are those who have the power to make laws regulating inter-human relations and to see that they are carried out; to levy taxes and to collect them; to impose military conscription; to judge and punish those who contravene the laws; to subject private contracts to rules, scrutiny and sanctions; to monopolise some branches of production and some public services or, if they so wish, all production and all public services; to promote or to hinder the exchange of goods; to wage war or make peace with the governors of other countries; to grant or withdraw privileges ... and so on. In short, the governors are those who have the power, to a greater or lesser degree, to make use of the social power, that is of the physical, intellectual and economic power of the whole community, in order to oblige everybody to carry out their wishes. And this power, in our opinion, constitutes the principle of government, of authority.

But what reason is there for the existence of government? Why give up one's personal liberty and initiative to a few individuals? Why give them this power to take over willy nilly the collective strength to use as they wish? Are they so exceptionally gifted as to be able to demonstrate with some show of reason their ability to replace the mass of the people

[1] which is a disease of the mind in which Man, once having by a logical process abstracted an individuals qualities, undergoes a kind of hallucination which makes him accept the abstraction for the real being.

and to safeguard the interests, all the interests, of everybody better than the interested parties themselves? Are they infallible and incorruptible to the point that one could, with some semblance of prudence, entrust the fate of each and all to their knowledge and to their goodness?

And even if men of infinite goodness and knowledge existed, and even supposing, what has never been observed in history, that governmental power were to rest in the hands of the most able and kindest among us, would government office add anything to their beneficial potential? Or would it instead paralyse and destroy it by reason of the necessity men in government have of dealing with so many matters which they do not understand, and above all of wasting their energy keeping themselves in power, their friends happy, and holding in check the malcontents as well as subduing the rebels?

Furthermore, however good or bad, knowledgeable or stupid the governors may be, who will appoint them to their exalted office? Do they impose themselves by right of conquest, war or revolution? But in that case what guarantee has the public that they will be inspired by the general good? Then it is a clear question of a coup d'état and if the victims are dissatisfied the only recourse open to them is that of force to shake off the yoke. Are they selected from one particular class or party? In which case the interests and ideas of that class or party will certainly triumph, and the will and the interests of the others will be sacrificed. Are they elected by universal suffrage? But in that case the only criterion is in numbers, which certainly are proof neither of reason, justice nor ability. Those elected would be those most able to deceive the public; and the minority, which can well be the other half minus one, would be sacrificed. And all this without taking into account that experience has demonstrated the impossibility of devising an electoral machine where the successful candidates are at least the real representatives of the majority.

3

Many and varied are the theories with which some have sought to explain and justify the existence of government. Yet all are based on the prejudiced view, whether admitted or not, that men have conflicting interests, and that an external, higher, authority is needed to oblige one section of the people to respect the interests of the other, prescribing and imposing that rule of conduct by which opposing interests can best

be resolved, and by which each individual will achieve the maximum satisfaction with the least possible sacrifice.

The Authoritarian theoreticians ask: if the interests, tendencies and aspirations of an individual are at odds with those of another or even those of society as a whole, who will have the right and the power to oblige each to respect the other's interests? Who will be able to prevent an individual from violating the general will? They say that the freedom of each is limited by the freedom of others; but who will establish these limits and who will see to it that they are respected? The natural antagonisms of interests and temperament create the need for government and justify authority which is a moderating influence in the social struggle, and defines the limits of individual rights and duties.

This is the theory; but if theories are to be valid they must be based on facts and explain them — and one knows only too well that in social economy too often are theories invented to justify the facts, that is to defend privilege and make it palatable to those who are its victims. Let us instead look at the facts.

Throughout history, just as in our time, government is either the brutal, violent, arbitrary rule of the few over the many or it is an organised instrument to ensure that dominion and privilege will be in the hands of those who by force, by cunning, or by inheritance, have cornered all the means of life, first and foremost the land, which they make use of to keep the people in bondage and to make them work for their benefit.

There are two ways of oppressing men: either directly by brute force, by physical violence; or indirectly by denying them the means of life and thus reducing them to a state of surrender. The former is at the root of power, that is of political privilege; the latter was the origin of property, that is of economic privilege. Men can also be suppressed by working on their intelligence and their feelings, which constitutes religious or "universitarian" power; but just as the spirit does not exist except as the resultant of material forces, so a lie and the organisms set up to propagate it have no raison d'être except in so far as they are the result of political and economic privileges, and a means to defend and to consolidate them.

In sparsely populated primitive societies with uncomplicated social relations, in any situation which prevented the establishment of habits, customs of solidarity, or which destroyed existing ones and established the domination of man by man — the two powers, political and economic, were to be found in the same hands, which could even be those of a single man. Those who by force have defeated and intimidated others, dispose of the persons and the belongings of the defeated and oblige them to serve and to work for them and obey their will in all respects.

They are at the same time the landowners, kings, judges and executioners.

But with the growth of society, with increasing needs, with more complex social relations, the continued existence of such a despotism became untenable. The rulers, for security reasons, for convenience and because of it being impossible to act otherwise, find themselves obliged on the one hand to have the support of a privileged class, that is of a number of individuals with a common interest in ruling, and on the other to leave it to each individual to fend for himself as best he can, reserving for themselves supreme rule, which is the right to exploit everybody as much as possible, and is the way to satisfy the vanity of those who want to give the orders. Thus, in the shadow of power, for its protection and support, often unbeknown to it, and for reasons beyond its control, private wealth, that is the owning class, is developed. And the latter, gradually concentrating in their hands the means of production, the real sources of life, agriculture, industry, barter, etc., end up by establishing their own power which, by reason of the superiority of its means, and the wide variety of interests that it embraces, always ends by more or less openly subjecting the political power, which is the government, and making it into its own gendarme.

This phenomenon has occurred many times in history. Whenever as a result of invasion or any military enterprise physical, brutal force has gained the upper hand in society, the conquerors have shown a tendency to concentrate government and property in their own hands. But always the government's need to win the support of a powerful class, and the demands of production, the impossibility of controlling and directing everything, have resulted in the re-establishment of private property, the division of the two powers, and with it the dependence in fact of those who control force — governments — on those who control the very source of force — the property-owners. The governor inevitably ends by becoming the owners' gendarme.

But never has this phenomenon been more accentuated than in modern times. The development of production, the vast expansion of commerce, the immeasurable power assumed by money, and all the economic questions stemming from the discovery of America, from the invention of machines, etc., have guaranteed this supremacy to the capitalist class which, no longer content with enjoying the support of the government, demanded that government should arise from its own ranks. A government which owed its origin to the right of conquest (divine right as the kings and their priests called it) though subjected by existing circumstances to the capitalist class, went on maintaining a proud and contemptuous attitude towards its now wealthy former slaves, and

had pretensions to independence of domination. That government was indeed the defender, the property owners' gendarme, but the kind of gendarmes who think they are somebody, and behave in an arrogant manner towards the people they have to escort and defend, when they don't rob or kill them at the next street corner; and the capitalist class got rid of it, or is in the process of so, doing by means fair or foul, and replacing it by a government of its own choosing, consisting of members of its own class, at all times under its control and specifically organised to defend that class against any possible demands by the disinherited. The modern Parliamentary system begins here.

Today, government, consisting of property owners and people dependent on them, is entirely at the disposal of the owners, so much so that the richest among them disdain to take part in it. Rothschild does not need to be either a Deputy or a Minister; it suffices that Deputies and Ministers take their orders from him.

In many countries workers nominally have a more or less important say in the election of the government. It is a concession made by the bourgeoisie, both to avail itself of popular support in its struggle against the monarchical and aristocratic power as well as to dissuade the people from thinking of emancipation by giving them the illusion of sovereignty. But whether the bourgeoisie foresaw it or not when they first gave the people the vote, the fact is that that right proved to be entirely derisory, and served only to consolidate the power of the bourgeoisie while giving the most active section of the working class false hopes of achieving power. Even with universal suffrage — and we could well say even more so with universal suffrage — the government remained the bourgeoisie's servant and gendarme. For were it to be otherwise with the government hinting that it might take up a hostile attitude, or that democracy could ever be anything but a pretence to deceive the people, the bourgeoisie, feeling its interests threatened, would be quick to react, and would make use of all the influence and force at its disposal, by reason of its wealth, to recall the government to its proper place as the bourgeoisie's gendarme.

The basic function of government everywhere in all times, whatever title it adopts and whatever its origin and organisation may be, is always that of oppressing and exploiting the masses, of defending the oppressors and the exploiters: and its principal, characteristic and indispensable, instruments are the police agent and the tax-collector, the soldier and the gaoler — to whom must be invariably added the trader in lies, be he priest or schoolmaster, remunerated or protected by the government to enslave minds and make them docilely accept the yoke.

It is true that to these basic functions, to these essential organs of government, other functions, other organs have been added in the course of history. Let us even also admit that never or hardly ever has a government existed in any country with a degree of civilisation which did not combine with its oppressive and plundering activities others which were useful or indispensable to social life. But this does not detract from the fact that government is by its nature oppressive and plundering, and that it is in origin and by its attitude, inevitably inclined to defend and strengthen the dominant class; indeed it confirms and aggravates the position.

In fact government takes the trouble to protect, more or less, the lives of citizens against direct and violent attack; it recognises and legalises a number of basic rights and duties as well as usages and customs without which social life would not be possible; it organises and manages a number of public services, such as the post, roads, cleansing and refuse disposal, land improvement and conservation, etc.; it promotes orphanages and hospitals, and often it condescends to pose as the protector and benefactor of the poor and the weak. But it is enough to understand how and why it carries out these functions to find the practical evidence that whatever governments do is always motivated by the desire to dominate, and is always geared to defending, extending and perpetuating its privileges and those of the class of which it is both the representative and defender.

A government cannot maintain itself for long without hiding its true nature behind a pretence of general usefulness; it cannot impose respect for the lives of privileged people if it does not appear to demand respect for all human life, it cannot impose acceptance of the privileges of the few if it does not pretend to be the guardian of the rights of all. "The law" — says Kropotkin, and by which is meant those who have made the law, that is, the government — "has used Man's social feelings to get passed not only the moral precepts which were acceptable to Man, but also orders which were useful only to the minority of exploiters against whom he would have rebelled."

A government cannot want society to break up, for it would mean that it and the dominant class would be deprived of the sources of exploitation; nor can it leave society to maintain itself without official intervention, for then the people would soon realise that government serves only to defend the property owners who keep them in conditions of starvation, and they would hasten to rid themselves of both the government and the property owners.

Today, governments, faced with the pressing and threatening demands of the workers, show a tendency to arbitrate in the dealings

between masters and workers; in this way they seek to sidetrack the workers' movement and, with a few deceptive reforms, to prevent the poor from taking for themselves what is their due, that is a part of wellbeing equal to that enjoyed by others.

Furthermore, one must bear in mind that on the one hand the bourgeoisie (the property owners) are always at war among themselves and gobbling each other up and that on the other hand the government, though springing from the bourgeoisie and its servant and protector, tends, as with every servant and every protector, to achieve its own emancipation and to dominate whoever it protects. Thus the game of the swings, the manoeuvres, the concessions and withdrawals, the attempts to find allies among the people against the conservatives, and among the conservatives against the people, which is the science of the governors, and which blinds the ingenuous and the phlegmatic who always wait for salvation to come down to them from above.

Despite all this, the nature of government does not change. If it assumes the role of controller and guarantor of the rights and duties of everyone, it perverts the sentiment of justice; it qualifies as a crime and punishes every action which violates or threatens the privileges of the rulers and the property owners, and declares as just and legal the most outrageous exploitation of the poor, the slow and sustained material and moral assassination perpetrated by those who have, at the expense of those who have not. If it appoints itself as the administrator of public services, again, as always, it looks after the interests of the rulers and the property owners and does not attend to those of the working people except where it has to because the people agree to pay. If it assumes the role of teacher, it hampers the propagation of truth and tends to prepare the minds and the hearts of the young to become either ruthless tyrants or docile slaves, according to the class to which they belong. In the hands of government everything becomes a means for exploitation, everything becomes a policing institution, useful only for keeping the people in check.

And it had to be thus. For if human existence is a struggle between men, there must obviously be winners and losers, and government, which is the prize in the struggle and a means for guaranteeing to the victors the results of victory and for perpetuating them, will certainly never fall into the hands of those who lose, whether the struggle is based on physical force, is intellectual, or is in the field of economics. And those who have struggled to win, that is, to secure better conditions for themselves than others enjoy, and to win privileges and power, will certainly not use it to defend the rights of the vanquished and set limits on their own power as well as that of their friends and supporters.

The government, or as some call it, the justiciary State, as moderator in the social struggle and the impartial administrator of the public interest, is a lie — an illusion, an utopia never achieved and never to be realised.

If Man's interests were really mutually antagonistic, if the struggle between men was indeed a basic essential law of human societies and if the liberty of the individual were to be limited by the liberty of others, then everyone would always seek to ensure that his interests prevailed, everyone would try to increase his own freedom at the expense of other people's freedom, and one would have a government, not just because it would be more or less useful to all members of society to have one, but because the victors would want to make sure of the fruits of victory by thoroughly subjecting the vanquished, and so free themselves from the trouble of being permanently on the defensive, entrusting their defence to men specially trained as professional gendarmes. In that case mankind would be condemned to perish or be for ever struggling between the tyranny of the victors and the rebellion of the vanquished.

But fortunately the future of mankind is a happier one because the law governing it is milder. This law is solidarity.

Man's fundamental essential characteristics are the instinct of his own preservation, without which no living being could exist, and the instinct of the preservation of the species, without which no species could have developed and endured. He is naturally driven to defend his individual existence and wellbeing, as well as that of his offspring, against everything and everybody.

In nature living beings have two ways of surviving and of making life more pleasant. One is by individual struggle against the elements and against other individuals of the same or other species; the other is by mutual aid, by cooperation, which could also be described as association for the struggle against all natural factors antagonistic to the existence, the development and wellbeing of the associates.

Apart from considerations of space, there is no need to examine in the pages that follow the relative role in the evolution of the organic world played by these two principles: of struggle and of cooperation. It will suffice to state that so far as Man is concerned, cooperation (voluntary or compulsory) has become the only means towards progress, advancement and security; and that struggle — a relic of our ancestors — has not only proved useless in ensuring individual wellbeing, but also is harmful to everybody, victors and vanquished alike.

The accumulated and communicated experience of the generations taught men that by uniting with other men their individual safety and wellbeing were enhanced. Thus, as a result of the very struggle for

existence waged against the natural environment and against individuals of the same species, a social feeling was developed in Man which completely transformed the conditions of his existence. And on the strength of this, Man was able to emerge from the animal state and rise to great power, and so lift himself above other animals that antimaterialist philosophers thought it necessary to invent an immaterial and immortal soul for him.

Many concurrent causes have contributed to the development of this social feeling which, starting from the animal basis of the instinct of preservation of the species (which is the social instinct limited to the natural family), has reached great heights both in intensity and in extent, so much so that it constitutes the very basis of man's moral nature.

Man, though he had emerged from the lower order of animal life, was weak and unequipped to engage in individual struggle against the carnivorous beasts. But with a brain capable of great development, a vocal organ capable of expressing with a variety of sounds different cerebral vibrations, and with hands specially suitable for fashioning matter to his will, must have very soon felt the need for, and the advantages to be derived from, association; indeed one can say that he could only emerge from the animal state when he became a social being and acquired the use of language, which is at the same time a consequence of, and an important factor in, sociability.

The relatively small number of human beings, because it made the struggle for existence between men, even without association, less bitter, less prolonged, less necessary, must have greatly facilitated the development of feelings of sympathy, and allowed time to discover and appreciate the usefulness of mutual aid.

Finally, Man's ability to modify his external environment and adapt it to his needs, which he acquired thanks to his original qualities applied in cooperation with a smaller or larger number of associates; the increasing number of demands which grow as the means of satisfying them grow and become needs; the division of labour which is the outcome of the systematic exploitation of nature to Man's advantage, all these factors have resulted in social life becoming the necessary environment for Man, outside of which he cannot go on living, or if he does, he returns to the animal state.

And by the refinement of feelings with the growth of relations, and by customs impressed on the species through heredity over thousands of centuries, this need of a social life, of an exchange of thoughts and feelings, has become for mankind a way of being which is essential to our way of life, and has been transformed into sympathy, friendship, love, and goes on independently of the material advantages that association

provides, so much so that in order to satisfy it one often faces all kinds of sufferings and even death.

In other words, the enormous advantages that accrue to men through association; the state of physical inferiority, in no wise comparable to his intellectual superiority, in which he finds himself in relation to the animal kingdom if he remains isolated; the possibility for men to join with an ever growing number of individuals and in relationships ever more intimate and complex to the point where the association extends to all mankind and all aspects of life, and perhaps more than anything, to the possibility for Man to produce, through work in cooperation with others, more than he needs for survival, and the affective sentiments that spring from all these — all have given to the human struggle for existence quite a different complexion from the struggle that is generally waged by other members of the animal kingdom.

Although we now know — and the findings of contemporary naturalists are daily providing us with new evidence — that cooperation has played and continues to play a most important role in the development of the organic world unsuspected by those who sought, quite irrelevantly anyway, to justify bourgeois rule with Darwinian theories, yet the gulf separating the struggle of man from that of the animal kingdom remains enormous, and in direct ratio to the distance between man and the other animals.

Other animals fight either individually or, more often, in small permanent or transitory groups against all nature including other individuals of the same species. The more social creatures among them, such as the ants, bees, etc., are loyal to all the individuals within the same ant-hill or swarm, but are at war with or indifferent to other communities of the same species. Human struggle instead tends always to widen the association among men, their community of interests, and to develop the feeling of love of man for his fellows, of conquering and overcoming the external forces of nature by humanity and for humanity. Every struggle aimed at gaining advantages independently of or at the expense of others, is contrary to the social nature of modern Man and tends to drive him back towards the animal state.

Solidarity, that is the harmony of interests and of feelings, the coming together of individuals for the wellbeing of all, and of all for the wellbeing of each, is the only environment in which Man can express his personality and achieve his optimum development and enjoy the greatest possible wellbeing. This is the goal towards which human evolution advances; it is the higher principle which resolves all existing antagonisms, that would otherwise be insoluble, and results in the freedom

of each not being limited by, but complemented — indeed finding the necessary raison d'être in — the freedom of others.

4

Michael Bakunin said that "No individual can recognise his own humanity, and consequently realise it in his lifetime, if not by recognising it in others and cooperating in its realisation for others. No man can achieve his own emancipation without at the same time working for the emancipation of all men around him. My freedom is the freedom of all since I am not truly free in thought and in fact, except when my freedom and my rights are confirmed and approved in the freedom and rights of all men who are my equals.

"It matters to me very much what other men are, because however independent I may appear to be or think I am, because of my social position, were I Pope, Tzar, Emperor or even Prime Minister, I remain always the product of what the humblest among them are: if they are ignorant, poor, slaves, my existence is determined by their slavery. I, an enlightened or intelligent man am, for instance — in the event — rendered stupid by their stupidity; as a courageous man I am enslaved by their slavery; as a rich man I tremble before their poverty; as a privileged person I blanch at their justice. I who want to be free cannot be because all the men around me do not yet want to be free, and consequently they become tools of oppression against me."

Solidarity is therefore the state of being in which Man attains the greatest degree of security and wellbeing; and therefore egoism itself, that is the exclusive consideration of one's own interests, impels Man and human society towards solidarity; or it would be better to say that egoism and altruism (concern for the interests of others) become fused into a single sentiment just as the interests of the individual and those of society coincide.

Yet Man could not in one leap pass from the animal state to the human state, from the brutish struggle between man and man to the joint struggle of all men united in comradeship against the outside forces of nature.

Guided by the advantages which association and the consequent division of labour offer, Man developed towards solidarity; but his development met with an obstacle which led him away from his goal and continues to do so to this day. Man discovered that he could, at least up to a certain point and for the material and basic needs which only

then did he feel, achieve the advantages of cooperation by subjecting other men to his will instead of joining with them; and in view of the fact that the fierce and anti-social instincts inherited from his animal ancestry were still strong in him, he obliged the weakest to work for him, preferring domination to association. Perhaps too, in most cases, it was in exploiting the vanquished that Man learned for the first time to understand the advantages of association, the good that Man could derive from the support of his fellows.

Thus the realisation of the usefulness of cooperation, which should have led to the triumph of solidarity in all human relations, instead gave rise to private property and government, that is to the exploitation of the labour of the whole community by a privileged minority.

It was still association and cooperation, outside which there is no possible human life; but it was a way of cooperation, imposed and controlled by a few for their own personal interest.

From this fact has arisen the great contradiction, which fills the pages of human history, between the tendency to association and comradeship for the conquest and adaptation of the external world to Man's needs and for the satisfaction of sentiments of affection — and the tendency to divide into many units separate and hostile as are the groupings determined by geographic and ethnographic conditions, as are the economic attitudes, as are those men who have succeeded in winning an advantage and want to make sure of it and add to it, as are those who hope to win a privilege, as are those who suffer by an injustice or a privilege and rebel and seek to make amends.

The principle of each for himself, which is the war of all against all, arose in the course of history to complicate, to sidetrack and paralyse the war of all against nature for the greatest wellbeing of mankind which can be completely successful only by being based on the principle of all for one and one for all.

Mankind has suffered great harm as a result of this intrusion of domination and exploitation in the midst of human association. But in spite of the terrible oppression to which the masses have been subjected, in spite of poverty, in spite of vice, crime and the degradation which poverty and slavery produce in the slaves and in the masters, in spite of accumulated antagonism, of wars of extermination, in spite of artificially created conflicting interests, the social instinct has survived and developed. Cooperation having always remained the essential condition for man to wage a successful war against external nature, it also remained the permanent cause for bringing men close together and for developing among them sentiments of sympathy. The very oppression of the masses created a feeling of comradeship among the oppressed;

and it is only because of the more or less conscious and widespread solidarity that existed among the oppressed that they were able to endure the oppression and that mankind survived the causes of death that crept into their midst.

Today the immense development of production, the growth of those requirements which can only be satisfied by the participation of large numbers of people in all countries, the means of communication, with travel becoming a commonplace, science, literature, businesses and even wars, all have drawn mankind into an ever tighter single body whose constituent parts, united among themselves, can only find fulfilment and freedom to develop through the wellbeing of the other constituent parts as well as of the whole.

The inhabitant of Naples is as concerned in the improvement to the living conditions of the people inhabiting the banks of the Ganges from whence cholera comes to him, as he is in the drainage of the fondaci of his own city. The wellbeing, the freedom and the future of a highlander lost among the gorges of the Apennines, are dependent not only on the conditions of prosperity or of poverty of the inhabitants of his village and on the general condition of the Italian people, but also on workers' conditions in America or Australia, on the discovery made by a Swedish scientist, on the state of mind and material conditions of the Chinese, on there being war or peace in Africa; in other words on all the circumstances large and small which anywhere in the world are acting on a human being.

In present day conditions in society, this vast solidarity which joins together all men is for the most part unconscious, since it emerges spontaneously out of the friction between individual interests, whereas men are hardly if at all concerned with the general interest. And this is the clearest proof that solidarity is a natural law of mankind, which manifests itself and commands respect in spite of all the obstacles, and the dissensions created by society as at present constituted.

On the other hand the oppressed masses who have never completely resigned themselves to oppression and poverty, and who today more than ever show themselves thirsting for justice, freedom and wellbeing, are beginning to understand that they will not be able to achieve their emancipation except by union and solidarity with all the oppressed, with the exploited everywhere in the world. And they also understand that the indispensable condition for their emancipation which cannot be neglected is the possession of the means of production, of the land and of the instruments of labour, and therefore the abolition of private property. And science, the observation of social manifestations, indicates that this abolition of private property would be of great value even

to the privileged minority, if only they were to want to give up their domineering attitude and work with everybody else for the common good.

So therefore if the oppressed masses were to refuse to work for others, and were to take over the land and the instruments of work from the landowners, or were to want to use them on their own account or for their own benefit, that is the benefit of all, if they were to decide never again to put up with domination and brute force, nor with economic privilege, and if the sentiment of human solidarity, strengthened by a community of interests, were to have put an end to wars and colonialism — what justification would there be for the continued existence of government?

Once private property has been abolished, government which is its defender must disappear. If it were to survive it would tend always to re-establish a privileged and oppressing class in one guise or another.

And the abolition of government does not and cannot mean the breakdown of the social link. Quite the contrary, cooperation which today is imposed and directed to the benefit of a few, would be free, voluntary and directed to everybody's interests; and therefore it would become that much more widespread and effective.

Social instinct, the sentiment of solidarity, would be developed to the highest degree; and every man would strive to do his best for everybody else, both to satisfy his intimate feelings as well as for his clearly understood interest.

From the free participation of all, by means of the spontaneous grouping of men according to their requirements and their sympathies, from the bottom to the top, from the simple to the complex, starting with the most urgent interests and arriving in the end at the most remote and most general, a social organisation would emerge the function of which would be the greatest wellbeing and the greatest freedom for everybody, and would draw together the whole of mankind into a community of comradeship, and would be modified and improved according to changing circumstances and the lessons learned from experience.

This society of free people, this society of friends is Anarchy.

5

So far we have considered government as it is, as it must of necessity be in a society based on privilege, exploitation and the oppression of man by man, on the conflict of interests, on the intrasocial struggle, in a word, on individual property.

We have seen how this state of conflict, far from being a necessary condition in Man's existence, is against the interests both of individuals and mankind; we have seen how cooperation, solidarity, is the law of human progress, and have concluded that by abolishing private property and all rule over man, government loses its reason for existing and must be abolished.

We might be told however: "But once the principle on which social organisation is based today were to be changed, and solidarity were to replace struggle, and common property were to take over from private property, government would change its nature and from being the protector and the representative of the interests of a class, since classes would no longer exist, would become the representative of the interests of society as a whole. Its role would be to provide and regulate social cooperation in the interests of all; to defend society from any direct attempts to reintroduce privilege, to forestall and suppress attempts from whatever quarter against the life, the wellbeing and freedom of each one of us.

"There are in society some offices too important and requiring too much attention and continuity, for them to be left to the free will of individuals, without the danger of seeing everything thrown into confusion.

"Who would organise and guarantee, if there were no government, food supplies, distribution, health services, the post and telegraph services and the railways, etc.? Who would look after public education? Who would undertake those vast exploratory projects, land drainage schemes, scientific research, which transform the face of the earth and increase Man's power a hundredfold?

"Who would watch over the conservation and development of social wealth to pass it on enriched and improved for future generations?

"Who would have a mandate to prevent and punish crime, that is anti-social actions?

"And what of those who fall short of the law of solidarity and don't want to work? And those who were to spread disease in a country and refused to take the kinds of hygienic precautions recognised as useful by science? And supposing there were some people, sane or insane, who wanted to set fire to the harvest, sexually assault children, or take advantage of their strength to assault the weak?

"To destroy private property and abolish existing governments, without then creating a government which would organise social life and ensure social solidarity, would not mean abolishing privilege and ushering in a world of peace and wellbeing; it would instead mean the destruction of all social ties, and drive mankind to barbarism, towards the rule of

each for himself, which is the triumph firstly of brute force and secondly of economic privilege."

Such are the objections the authoritarians face us with, even when they are socialists, that is when they want to abolish private property and the class government which it gives rise to.

We can answer that in the first place it is not true that once the social conditions are changed the nature and the role of government would change. Organ and function are inseparable terms. Take away from an organ its function and either the organ dies or the function is re-established. Put an army in a country in which there are neither reasons for, nor fear of, war, civil or external, and it will provoke war or, if it does not succeed in its intentions, it will collapse. A police force where there are no crimes to solve or criminals to apprehend, will invent both, or cease to exist.

In France there has existed for centuries an institution, the louveterie now incorporated in the Forestry Administration, the officials of which are entrusted with the task of destroying wolves and other harmful creatures. No one will be surprised to learn that it is just because this institution exists that there are still wolves in France and in exceptional winters they play havoc. The public hardly worries about the wolves as there are the wolf-exterminators who are there to deal with them, and these certainly hunt the wolves but they do so intelligently, sparing the dens long enough for them to rear their young and so prevent the extermination of an interesting animal species. French peasants have in fact little confidence in these wolf-catchers, and consider them more as wolf-preservers. And it is understandable: what would the "Lieutenants of the louveterie" do if there were no more wolves?

A government, that is a group of people entrusted with making the laws and empowered to use the collective power to oblige each individual to obey them, is already a privileged class and cut off from the people. As any constituted body would do, it will instinctively seek to extend its powers, to be beyond public control, to impose its own policies and to give priority to its special interests. Having been put in a privileged position, the government is already at odds with the people whose strength it disposes of.

In any case, even if a government wanted to, it could not please everybody, even if it did manage to please a few. It would have to defend itself against the malcontents, and would therefore need to get the support of one section of the people to do so. And then the old story of the privileged class which arises through the complicity of the government starts all over again and, in this instance, if it did not seize the land

would certainly capture key posts, specially created, and would oppress and exploit no less than the capitalist class.

The rulers accustomed to giving orders, would not wish to be once more members of the public, and if they could not hold on to power they would at least make sure of securing privileged positions for when they must hand over power to others. They would use every means available to those in power to have their friends elected as the successors who would then in their turn support and protect them. And thus government would be passed to and fro in the same hands, and democracy, which is the alleged government of all, would end up, as usual, in an oligarchy, which is the government of a few, the government of a class.

And what an all-powerful, oppressive, all-absorbing oligarchy must be one which has at its service, that is at its disposal, all social wealth, all public services, from food to the manufacture of matches, from the universities to the music-halls!

6

But let us even suppose that the government were not in any case a privileged class, and could survive without creating around itself a new privileged class, and remain the representative, the servant as it were, of the whole of society. And what useful purpose could this possibly serve? How and in what way would this increase the strength, the intelligence, the spirit of solidarity, the concern for the wellbeing of all and of future generations, which at any given time happen to exist in a given society?

It is always the old question of the bound man who having managed to live in spite of his bonds thinks he lives because of them. We are used to living under a government which takes over all that energy, intelligence and will which it can direct for its own ends; and it hinders, paralyses and suppresses those who do not serve its purpose or are hostile — and we think that everything that is done in society is carried out thanks to the government, and that without the government there would no longer be any energy, intelligence or goodwill left in society. Thus (as we have already pointed out), the landowner who has seized the land gets others to work it for his profit, leaving the worker with the bare necessities so that he can and will want to go on working — and the enslaved worker imagines that he could not live without the master, as if the latter had created the land and the forces of nature.

What can government itself add to the moral and material forces that exist in society? Would it be a similar case to that of the God of the Bible who creates from nothing?

Since nothing is created in what is usually called the material world, so nothing is created in this more complicated form of the material world which is the social world. And so the rulers can only make use of the forces that exist in society — except for those great forces which governmental action paralyses and destroys, and those rebel forces, and all that is wasted through conflicts; inevitably tremendous losses in such an artificial system. If they contribute something of their own they can only do so as men and not as rulers. And of those material and moral forces which remain at the disposal of the government, only a minute part is allowed to play a really useful role for society. The rest is either used up in repressive actions to keep the rebel forces in check or is otherwise diverted from its ends of the general good and used to benefit a few at the expense of the majority of the people.

Much has been said about the respective roles of individual initiative and social action in the life and progress of human societies, and by the usual tricks of the language of metaphysics, the issues have become so confused that in the end those who declared that everything is maintained and kept going in the human world thanks to individual initiative appear as radicals. In fact this is a commonsense truth which is obvious the moment one tries to understand the significance of words. The real being is man, the individual. Society or the collectivity — and the State or government which claims to represent it — if it is not a hollow abstraction, must be made up of individuals. And it is in the organism of every individual that all thoughts and human actions inevitably have their origin, and from being individual they become collective thoughts and acts when they are or become accepted by many individuals. Social action, therefore, is neither the negation nor the complement of individual initiative, but is the resultant of initiatives, thoughts and actions of all individuals who make up society; a resultant which, all other things being equal, is greater or smaller depending on whether individual forces are directed to a common objective or are divided or antagonistic. And if instead, as do the authoritarians, one means government action when one talks of social action, then this is still the resultant of individual forces, but only of those individuals who form the government or who by reason of their position can influence the policy of the government.

Therefore in the age-long struggle between liberty and authority, or in other words between socialism and a class state, the question is not really one of changing the relationships between society and the individual; nor is it a question of increasing the independence of the individual

at the expense of social interference or vice versa. But rather is it a question of preventing some individuals from oppressing others; of giving all individuals the same rights and the same means of action; and of replacing the initiative of the few, which inevitably results in the oppression of everybody else. It is after all a question of destroying once and for all the domination and exploitation of man by man, so that everyone can have a stake in the commonweal, and individual forces, instead of being destroyed or fighting among themselves or being cut off from each other, will find the possibility of complete fulfilment, and come together for the greater benefit of everybody.

Even if we pursue our hypothesis of the ideal government of the authoritarian socialists, it follows from what we have said that far from resulting in an increase in the productive, organising and protective forces in society, it would greatly reduce them, limiting initiative to a few, and giving them the right to do everything without, of course, being able to provide them with the gift of being all-knowing.

Indeed, if you take out from the law and the entire activity of a government all that exists to defend the privileged minority and which represents the wishes of the latter themselves, what is left which is not the result of the action of everybody? Sismondi said that "the State is always a conservative power which legalises, regularises and organises the victories of progress" (and history adds that it directs them for its own ends and that of the privileged class) "but never introduces them. These victories are always started down below, they are born in the heart of society, from individual thought which is then spread far and wide, becomes opinion, the majority, but in making its way it must always meet with and combat in the powers-that-be, tradition, habit, privilege and error".

Anyway, in order to understand how a society can live without government, one has only to observe in depth existing society, and one will see how in fact the greater part, the important part, of social life is discharged even today outside government intervention, and that government only interferes in order to exploit the masses, to defend the privileged minority, and moreover it finds itself sanctioning, quite ineffectually, all that has been done without its intervention, and often in spite of and even against it. Men work, barter, study, travel and follow to the best of their knowledge moral rules and those of wellbeing; they benefit from the advances made in science and the arts, have widespread relations among themselves — all without feeling the need for somebody to tell them how to behave. Indeed it is just those matters over which government has no control that work best, that give rise to less contro-

versy and are resolved by general consent so that everybody feels happy as well as being useful.

Nor is the government specially needed for the large-scale enterprises and public services requiring the full-time employment of a large number of people from different countries and conditions. Thousands of these undertakings are, even today, the result of individual associations freely constituted, and are by common accord those that work best. Nor are we talking of capitalist associations, organised for the purpose of exploitation, however much they too demonstrate the potentialities and the power of a free association and how it can spread to include people from every country as well as vast and contrasting interests. But rather let us talk about those associations which, inspired by a love of one's fellow beings, or by a passion for science, or more simply by the desire to enjoy oneself and to be applauded, are more representative of the groupings as they will be in a society in which, having abolished private property and the internecine struggle between men, everybody will find his interest in that of everybody else, and his greatest satisfaction in doing good and in pleasing others. Scientific Societies and Congresses, the international life-saving association, the Red Cross, the geographical societies, the workers' organisations, the voluntary bodies that rush to help whenever there are great public disasters, are a few examples among many of the power of the spirit of association, which always manifests itself when it is a question of a need or an issue deeply felt, and the means are not lacking. If the voluntary association is not world-wide and does not embrace all the material and moral aspects of activity it is because of the obstacles put in its path by governments, by the dissensions created by private property, and the impotence and discouragement felt by most people as a result of the seizure of all wealth by a few.

For instance, the government takes over the responsibilities of the postal services, the railways and so on. But in what way does it help these services? When the people are enabled to enjoy them, and feel the need for these services, they think about organising them, and the technicians don't need a government licence to get to work. And the more the need is universal and urgent, the more volunteers will there be to carry it out. If the people had the power to deal with the problems of production and food supplies, oh! have no fear that they might just die of hunger waiting for a government to make the necessary laws to deal with the problem. If there had to be a government, it would still be obliged to wait until the people had organised everything, in order then to come along with laws to sanction and exploit what had already been done. It is demonstrated that private interest is the great incentive for all activ-

ities: well, when the interest of all will be that of each individual (and this would obviously be the case if private property did not exist) then everyone will act, and if we do things now which only interest a few, we will do them that much better and more intensively when they will be of interest to everybody. And it is difficult to understand why there should be people who believe that the carrying out and the normal functioning of public services vital to our daily lives would be more reliable if carried out under the instructions of a government rather than by the workers themselves who, by direct election or through agreements made with others, have chosen to do that kind of work and carry it out under the direct control of all the interested parties.

Of course in every large collective undertaking, a division of labour, technical management, administration, etc., is necessary. But authoritarians clumsily play on words to produce a raison d'être for government out of the very real need for the organisation of work. Government, it is well to repeat it, is the concourse of individuals who have had, or have seized, the right and the means to make laws and to oblige people to obey; the administrator, the engineer, etc., instead are people who are appointed or assume the responsibility to carry out a particular job and do so. Government means the delegation of power, that is the abdication of initiative and sovereignty of all into the hands of a few; administration means the delegation of work, that is tasks given and received, free exchange of services based on free agreement. The governor is a privileged person since he has the right to command others and to make use of the efforts of others to make his ideas and his personal wishes prevail; the administrator, the technical director, etc., are workers like the rest, that is, of course, in a society in which everyone has equal means to develop and that all are or can be at the same time intellectual and manual workers, and that the only differences remaining between men are those which stem from the natural diversity of aptitudes, and that all jobs, all functions give an equal right to the enjoyment of social possibilities. Let one not confuse the function of government with that of an administration, for they are essentially different, and if today the two are often confused, it is only because of economic and political privilege.

But let us hasten to pass on to the functions for which government is considered, by all who are not anarchists, as quite indispensable: the internal and external defence of a society, that is to say war, the police and justice.

Once governments have been abolished and the social wealth has been put at the disposal of everybody, then all the antagonisms between people will soon disappear and war will no longer have a raison d'être. We would add, furthermore, that in the present state of the world, when a

revolution occurs in one country, if it does not have speedy repercussions elsewhere it will however meet with much sympathy everywhere, so much so that no government will dare to send its troops abroad for fear of having a revolutionary uprising on its own doorstep. But, by all means, let us admit that the governments of the still unemancipated countries were to want to, and could, attempt to reduce free people to a state of slavery once again. Would this people require a government to defend itself? To wage war men are needed who have the necessary geographical and mechanical knowledge, and above all large masses of the population willing to go and fight. A government can neither increase the abilities of the former nor the will and courage of the latter. And the experience of history teaches us that a people who really want to defend their own country are invincible; and in Italy everyone knows that before the corps of volunteers (anarchist formations) thrones topple, and regular armies composed of conscripts or mercenaries, disappear.

And what of the police and of justice? Many suppose that if there were no carabineers, policemen and judges, everyone would be free to kill, to ravish, to harm others as the mood took one; and that anarchists, in the name of their principles, would wish to see that strange liberty respected which violates and destroys the freedom and life of others. They seem almost to believe that after having brought down government and private property we would allow both to be quietly built up again, because of a respect for the freedom of those who might feel the need to be rulers and property owners. A truly curious way of interpreting our ideas! ... of course it is easier to brush them off with a shrug of the shoulders than to take the trouble of confuting them.

The freedom we want, for ourselves and for others, is not an absolute metaphysical, abstract freedom which in practice is inevitably translated into the oppression of the weak; but it is real freedom, possible freedom, which is the conscious community of interests, voluntary solidarity. We proclaim the maxim do as you wish, and with it we almost summarise our programme, for we maintain — and it doesn't take much to understand why — that in a harmonious society, in a society without government and without property, each one will want what he must do.

But supposing that as a result of the kind of education received from present society, or for physical misfortune or for any other reason, someone were to want to do harm to us and to others, one can be sure that we would exert ourselves to prevent him from so doing with all the means at our disposal. Of course, because we know that man is the consequence of his own organism as well as of the cosmic and social environment in which he lives; because we do not confuse the inviolate right of defence with the claimed ridiculous right to punish;

and since with the delinquent, that is with he who commits anti-social acts, we would not, to be sure, see the rebel slave, as happens with judges today, but the sick brother needing treatment, so would we not introduce hatred in the repression, and would make every effort not to go beyond the needs of defence, and would not think of avenging ourselves but of seeking to cure, redeem the unhappy person with all the means that science offered us. In any case, irrespective of the anarchists' interpretation (who could, as happens with all theorists, lose sight of reality in pursuing a semblance of logic), it is certain that the people would not allow their wellbeing and their freedom to be attacked with impunity, and if the necessity arose, they would take measures to defend themselves against the anti-social tendencies of a few. But to do so, what purpose is served by people whose profession is the making of laws; while other people spend their lives seeking out and inventing law-breakers? When the people really disapprove of something and consider it harmful, they always manage to prevent it more successfully than do the professional legislators, police and judges. When in the course of insurrections the people have, however mistakenly, wanted private property to be respected, they did so in a way that an army of policemen could not.

Customs always follow the needs and feelings of the majority: and the less they are subject to the sanctions of law the more are they respected, for everyone can see and understand their use, and because the interested parties, having no illusions as to the protection offered by government, themselves see to it that they are respected. For a caravan travelling across the deserts of Africa the good management of water stocks is a matter of life and death for all; and in those circumstances water becomes a sacred thing and no one would think of wasting it. Conspirators depend on secrecy, and the secret is kept or abomination strikes whoever violates it. Gambling debts are not secured by law, and among gamblers whoever does not pay up is considered and considers himself dishonoured.

Is it perhaps because of the gendarmes that more people are not killed? In most of the villages in Italy the gendarmes are only seen from time to time; millions of people cross the mountains and pass through the countryside far from the protecting eye of authority, such that one could strike them down without the slightest risk of punishment; yet they are no less safe than those who live in the most protected areas. And statistics show that the number of crimes is hardly affected by repressive measures, whereas it changes dramatically with changes in economic conditions and in the attitudes of public opinion.

Anyway, punitive laws are only concerned with exceptional, unusual occurrences. Daily life carries on beyond the reach of the codicil and is controlled, almost unconsciously, with the tacit and voluntary agreement of all, by a number of usages and customs which are much more important to social life than the Articles of the Penal Code, and better respected in spite of being completely free from any sanction other than the natural one of the disesteem in which those who violate them are held and the consequences that arise therefrom.

And when differences were to arise between men, would not arbitration voluntarily accepted, or pressure of public opinion, be perhaps more likely to establish where the right lies than through an irresponsible magistrature which has the right to adjudicate on everything and everybody and is inevitably incompetent and therefore unjust?

Since, generally speaking, government only exists to protect the privileged classes, so the police and the magistrature exist only to punish those crimes which are not so considered by the public and only harm the privileges of the government and of property-owners. There is nothing more pernicious for the real defence of society, for the defence of the wellbeing and freedom of all, than the setting up of these classes which exist on the pretext of defending everybody but become accustomed to consider every man as game to be caged, and strike at you without knowing why, by orders of a chief whose irresponsible, mercenary ruffians they are.

7

That's all very well, some say, and anarchy may be a perfect form of human society, but we don't want to take a leap in the dark. Tell us therefore in detail how your society will be organised. And there follows a whole series of questions, which are very interesting if we were involved in studying the problems that will impose themselves on the liberated society, but which are useless, or absurd, even ridiculous, if we are expected to provide definitive solutions. What methods will be used to teach children? How will production be organised? Will there still be large cities, or will the population be evenly distributed over the whole surface of the earth? And supposing all the inhabitants of Siberia should want to spend the winter in Nice? And if everyone were to want to eat partridge and drink wine from the Chianti district? And who will do a miner's job or be a seaman? And who will empty the privies? And will sick people be treated at home or in hospital? And who will establish

the railway timetable? And what will be done if an engine-driver has a stomach-ache while the train is moving? … And so on to the point of assuming that we have all the knowledge and experience of the unknown future, and that in the name of anarchy, we should prescribe for future generations at what time they must go to bed, and on what days they must pare their corns.

If indeed our readers expect a reply from us to these questions, or at least to those which are really serious and important, which is more than our personal opinion at this particular moment, it means that we have failed in our attempt to explain to them what anarchism is about.

We are no more prophets than anyone else; and if we claimed to be able to give an official solution to all the problems that will arise in the course of the daily life of a future society, then what we meant by the abolition of government would be curious to say the least. For we would be declaring ourselves the government and would be prescribing, as do the religious legislators, a universal code for present and future generations. It is just as well that not having the stake or prisons with which to impose our bible, mankind would be free to laugh at us and at our pretensions with impunity!

We are very concerned with all the problems of social life, both in the interest of science, and because we reckon to see anarchy realised and to take part as best we can in the organisation of the new society. Therefore we do have our solutions which, depending on the circumstances, appear to us either definitive or transitory — and but for space considerations we would say something on this here. But the fact that because today, with the evidence we have, we think in a certain way on a given problem does not mean that this is how it must be dealt with in the future. Who can foresee the activities which will grow when mankind is freed from poverty and oppression, when there will no longer be either slaves or masters, and when the struggle between peoples, and the hatred and bitterness that are engendered as a result, will no longer be an essential part of existence? Who can predict the progress in science and in the means of production, of communication and so on?

What is important is that a society should be brought into being in which the exploitation and domination of man by man is not possible; in which everybody has free access to the means of life, of development and of work, and that all can participate, as they wish and know how, in the organisation of social life. In such a society obviously all will be done to best satisfy the needs of everybody within the framework of existing knowledge and conditions; and all will change for the better with the growth of knowledge and the means.

After all, a programme which is concerned with the bases of the social structure, cannot do other than suggest a method. And it is the method which above all distinguishes between the parties and determines their historical importance. Apart from the method, they all talk of wanting the wellbeing of humanity and many really do; the parties disappear and with them all action organised and directed to a given end. Therefore one must consider anarchy above all as a method.

The methods from which the different non-anarchist parties expect, or say they do, the greatest good of one and all can be reduced to two, the authoritarian and the so-called liberal. The former entrusts to a few the management of social life and leads to the exploitation and oppression of the masses by the few. The latter relies on free individual enterprise and proclaims, if not the abolition, at least the reduction of governmental functions to an absolute minimum; but because it respects private property and is entirely based on the principle of each for himself and therefore of competition between men, the liberty it espouses is for the strong and for the property owners to oppress and exploit the weak, those who have nothing; and far from producing harmony, tends to increase even more the gap between rich and poor and it too leads to exploitation and domination, in other words, to authority. This second method, that is liberalism, is in theory a kind of anarchy without socialism, and therefore is simply a lie, for freedom is not possible without equality, and real anarchy cannot exist without solidarity, without socialism. The criticism liberals direct at government consists only of wanting to deprive it of some of its functions and to call on the capitalists to fight it out among themselves, but it cannot attack the repressive functions which are of its essence: for without the gendarme the property owner could not exist, indeed the government's powers of repression must perforce increase as free competition results in more discord and inequality.

Anarchists offer a new method: that is free initiative of all and free compact when, private property having been abolished by revolutionary action, everybody has been put in a situation of equality to dispose of social wealth. This method, by not allowing access to the reconstitution of private properly, must lead, via free association, to the complete victory of the principle of solidarity.

Viewed in this way, one sees how all the problems that are advanced in order to counter anarchist ideas are instead an argument in their favour, because only anarchy points the way along which they can find, by trial and error, that solution which best satisfies the dictates of science as well as the needs and wishes of everybody.

How will children be educated? We don't know. So what will happen? Parents, pedagogues and all who are concerned with the future of the young generation will come together, will discuss, will agree or divide according to the views they hold, and will put into practice the methods which they think are the best. And with practice that method which in fact is the best, will in the end be adopted.

And similarly with all problems which present themselves.

It follows from what we have said so far, that anarchy, as understood by the anarchists and as only they can interpret it, is based on socialism. Indeed were it not for those schools of socialism which artificially divide the natural unity of the social question, and only consider some aspects out of context, and were it not for the misunderstandings with which they seek to tangle the path to the social revolution, we could say straight out that anarchy is synonymous with socialism, for both stand for the abolition of the domination and exploitation of man by man, whether they are exercised at bayonet point or by a monopoly of the means of life.

Anarchy, in common with socialism, has as its basis, its point of departure, its essential environment, equality of conditions; its beacon is solidarity and freedom is its method. It is not perfection, it is not the absolute ideal which like the horizon recedes as fast as we approach it; but it is the way open to all progress and all improvements for the benefit of everybody.

8

Having established that anarchy is the only form of human society which leaves open the way to the achievement of the greatest good for mankind, since it alone destroys every class bent on keeping the masses oppressed and in poverty; having established that anarchy is possible and since, in fact, all it does is to free mankind from the government and obstacles against which it has always had to struggle in order to advance along its difficult road, authoritarians withdraw to their last ditches where they are reinforced by many who though they are passionate lovers of freedom and justice, fear freedom and cannot make up their minds to visualise a humanity which lives and progresses without guardians and without shepherds and, pressed by the truth, they pitifully ask that the matter should be put off for as long as possible.

This is the substance of the arguments that are put to us at this point in the discussion.

This society without government, which maintains itself by means of free and voluntary cooperation; this society which relies in everything on the spontaneous action of interests and which is entirely based on solidarity and love, is certainly a wonderful ideal, they say; but like all ideals it lives in the clouds. We find ourselves in a world which has always been divided into oppressors and oppressed; and if the former are full of the spirit of domination and have all the vices of tyrants, the latter are broken by servility and have the even worse vices that result from slavery. The feeling of solidarity is far from being dominant in contemporary society, and if it is true that men are and become always more united, it is equally true that what one sees increasingly, and which makes a deeper impression on human character, is the struggle for existence which each individual is waging daily against everybody else; it is competition which presses on everybody, workers and masters alike, and makes every man into an enemy in the eyes of his neighbour. How will these men, brought up in a society based on class and individual conflict, ever be able to change themselves suddenly and become capable of living in a society in which everyone will do as he wishes and must do, and without outside coercion and through the force of his own will, seek the welfare of others? With what single-mindedness, with what common sense would you entrust the fate of the revolution and of mankind to an ignorant mob, weakened by poverty, brainwashed by the priest, and which today will be blindly bloodthirsty, while tomorrow it will allow itself to be clumsily deceived by a rogue, or bow its head servilely under the heel of the first military dictator who dares to make himself master? Would it not be more prudent to advance towards the anarchist ideal by first passing through a democratic or socialist republic? Will there not be a need for a government of the best people to educate and to prepare the generations for things to come?

These objections also would not have a raison d'être if we had succeeded in making ourselves understood and in convincing readers with what we have already written; but in any case, even at the risk of repeating ourselves, it will be as well to answer them.

We are always faced with the prejudice that government is a new force that has emerged from no one knows where which in itself adds something to the total forces and capacities of those individuals who constitute it and of those who obey it. Instead all that happens in the world is done by people; and government qua government, contributes nothing of its own apart from the tendency to convert everything into a monopoly for the benefit of a particular party or class, as well as offering resistance to every initiative which comes from outside its own clique.

To destroy authority, to abolish government, does not mean the destruction of individual and collective forces which operate in society, nor the influences which people mutually exert on each other; to do so would reduce humanity to being a mass of detached and inert atoms, which is an impossibility, but assuming it were possible, would result in the destruction of any form of society, the end of mankind. The abolition of authority means, the abolition of the monopoly of force and of influence; it means the abolition of that state of affairs for which social power, that is the combined forces of society, is made into the instrument of thought, the will and interests of a small number of individuals, who by means of the total social power, suppress, for their personal advantage and for their own ideas the freedom of the individual; it means destroying a way of social organisation with which the future is burdened between one revolution and the next, for the benefit of those who have been the victors for a brief moment.

Michael Bakunin in an article published in 1872, after pointing out that the principal means of action of the International were the propagation of its ideas and the organisation of the spontaneous action of its members on the masses, adds that:

"To whoever might claim that action so organised would be an assault on the freedom of the masses, an attempt to create a new authoritarian power, we would reply that he is nothing but a sophist and a fool. So much the worse for those who ignore the natural and social law of human solidarity, to the point of imagining that an absolute mutual independence of individuals and of the masses is something possible, or at least desirable. To wish it means to want the destruction of society, for the whole of social life is no other than this unceasing mutual dependence of individuals and masses. All individuals, even the most intelligent and the strongest, indeed above all the intelligent and strong, each at every moment in his life is at the same time its producer and its product. The very freedom of each individual is no other than the resultant, continually reproduced, of this mass of material, intellectual and moral influences exerted on him by all who surround him, by the society in the midst of which he is born, develops, and dies. To want to escape from this influence in the name of a transcendental, divine, freedom that is absolutely egoistic and sufficient unto itself, is the tendency of non-being. This much vaunted independence of the idealists and metaphysicians, and individual freedom thus conceived, are therefore nothingness.

"In nature, as in human society, which is no other than this same nature, all that lives, only lives on the supreme condition of intervening in the most positive manner, and as powerfully as its nature allows, in

the lives of others. The abolition of this mutual influence would be death. And when we vindicate the freedom of the masses, we are by no means suggesting the abolition of any of the natural influences that individuals or groups of individuals exert on them; what we want is the abolition of influences which are artificial, privileged, legal, official."

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Obviously, in the present state of mankind, when the vast majority of people, oppressed by poverty and stupefied by superstition, stagnate in a state of humiliation, the fate of humanity depends on the action of a relatively small number of individuals; obviously it will not be possible suddenly to get people to raise themselves to the point where they feel the duty, indeed the pleasure from controlling their own actions in such a way that others will derive the maximum benefit therefrom. But if today the thinking and directing forces in society are few, it is not a reason for paralysing yet more of them and of subjecting many others to a few of them. It is not a reason for organising society in such a way that (thanks to the apathy that is the result of secured positions, thanks to birth, patronage, esprit de corps, and all the government machinery) the most lively forces and real ability end up by finding themselves outside the government and almost without influence on social life; and those that attain to government, finding themselves out of their environment, and being above all interested in remaining in power, lose all possibilities of acting and only serve as an obstacle to others.

Once this negative power that is government is abolished, society will be what it can be, but all that it can be given the forces and abilities available at the time. If there are educated people who wish to spread knowledge they will organise the schools and make a special effort to persuade everybody of the usefulness and pleasure to be got from an education. And if there were no such people, or only a few, a government could not create them; all it could do would be what happens now, take the few that there are away from their rewarding work, and set them to drafting regulations which have to be imposed with policemen, and make intelligent and devoted teachers into political beings, that is useless parasites, all concerned with imposing their whims and with maintaining themselves in power.

If there are doctors and experts in public health, they will organise the health service. And if there were none, the government could not create them: all it could do would be to cast doubts on the abilities of existing

doctors which a public, justifiably suspicious of all that is imposed from above, would seize upon to get rid of them.

If there are engineers, engine drivers and so on, they will organise the railways. And if there were none, once again, a government could not create them.

The revolution, by abolishing government and private property, will not create forces that do not exist; but it will leave the way open for the development of all available forces and talents, will destroy every class with an interest in keeping the masses in a state of brutishness, and will ensure that everyone will be able to act and to influence according to his abilities, his enthusiasm and his interests.

And this is the only way that the masses can raise themselves, for it is only through freedom that one educates oneself to be free, just as it is only by working that one can learn to work. A government, assuming it had no other disadvantages, would always have that of accustoming the governed to timidity, and of tending to become always more oppressive and of making itself ever more necessary.

Besides, if one wants a government which has to educate the masses and put them on the road to anarchy, one must also indicate what will be the background, and the way of forming this government.

Will it be the dictatorship of the best people? But who are the best? And who will recognise these qualities in them? The majority is generally attached to established prejudices, and has ideas and attitudes which have already been superseded by a better endowed minority; but among the thousand minorities all of which believe themselves to be right, and can all be right on some issues, by whom and with what criterion will the choice be made to put the social forces at the disposal of one of them when only the future can decide between the parties in conflict? If you take a hundred intelligent supporters of dictatorship, you will discover that each one of them believes that he should be if not the dictator himself, or one of them, at least very close to the dictatorship. So dictators would be those who, pursuing one course or another, succeed in imposing themselves; and in the present political climate, one can safely say that all their efforts would be employed in the struggle to defend themselves against the attacks of their enemies, conveniently forgetting any vague intentions of social education, assuming that they ever had such intentions.

Will it be instead a government elected by universal suffrage, and thus the more or less sincere expression of the wishes of the majority? But if you consider these worthy electors as unable to look after their own interests themselves, how is it that they will know how to choose for themselves the shepherds who must guide them? And how will they be

able to solve this problem of social alchemy, of producing the election of a genius from the votes of a mass of fools? And what will happen to the minorities which are still the most intelligent, most active and radical part of a society?

In order to solve the social problem for the benefit of everybody there is only one means: to crush those who own social wealth by revolutionary action, and put everything at the disposal of everybody, and leave all the forces, the ability, and all the goodwill that exist among the people, free to act and to provide for the needs of all.

We struggle for anarchy, and for socialism, because we believe that anarchy and socialism must be realised immediately, that is to say that in the revolutionary act we must drive government away, abolish property and entrust public services, which in this context will include all social life, to the spontaneous, free, not official, not authorised efforts of all interested parties and of all willing helpers.

Of course there will be difficulties and drawbacks; but they will be resolved, and they will only be resolved in an anarchist way, by means, that is, of the direct intervention of the interested parties and by free agreements.

We do not know whether anarchy and socialism will triumph when the next revolution takes place; but there is no doubt that if the so-called programmes of compromise triumph, it will be because on this occasion, we have been defeated, and never because we believed it useful to leave standing any part of the evil system under which mankind groans.

In any case we will have on events the kind of influence which will reflect our numerical strength, our energy, our intelligence and our intransigence. Even if we are defeated, our work will not have been useless, for the greater our resolve to achieve the implementation of our programme in full, the less property, and less government will there be in the new society. And we will have performed a worthy task for, after all, human progress is measured by the extent government power and private property are reduced.

And if today we fall without compromising, we can be sure of victory tomorrow.

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A Little Theory

Errico Malatesta

Revolt rumbles everywhere. Here it is the expression of an idea, and there the result of a need; most often it is the consequence of the intertwining of needs and ideas which mutually generate and reinforce each other. It fastens itself to the causes of evil or strikes close by, it is conscious or instinctive, it is humane or brutal, generous or narrowly selfish, but it always grows and extends itself.

It is history which advances: it is useless to take time to complain about the routes that it chooses, since these routes have been marked out by all previous evolution.

But history is made by men; and since we do not want to remain indifferent and passive spectators to the historic tragedy, since we want to contribute all our forces to determine the events which seem to us most favorable to our cause, we must have a criterion to guide us in the evaluation of the facts which are produced, and especially in choosing the place that we will occupy in the combat.

The end justifies the means: we have spoken much ill of that maxim. In reality, it is the universal guide of conduct.

One could say better: each end contains its means. It is necessary to seek morality in the end; the means is fatally determined.

The end that one proposes being given, by will or by necessity, the great problem of life is to find the means which, according to the circumstances, lead most certainly and most economically to the coveted end. The manner in which one resolves that problem depends, as much as it can depend on the human will, on whether an individual or a party reaches its own end, whether it will be useful to its cause or serve, without wishing to, the enemy cause. To have found the good means, that is the whole secret of the great men and great parties, who have left their marks on history.

The end of the Jesuits is, for the mystics, the glory of God; for the others, the power of the Society. Thus they must try to daze the masses, to terrorize them, to make them submit.

The aim of the Jacobins and of all the authoritarian parties, who believe themselves in possession of the absolute truth, is to impose their ideas on the mass of the lay people. They must for that attempt to seize power, to subjugate the masses and to fix humanity on the procustean bed of their conceptions.

As for us, it is another thing: our aim is much different, thus our means must be very different.

We do not fight to put ourselves in the place of the exploiters and oppressors of today, and do not struggle for the triumph of an abstraction. We are not like that Italian patriot who said: "What matter if all Italians faint with hunger, provided that Italy be great and glorious!" Nor, no more, like that comrade who admitted that it would be equal to him to massacre three-quarters of the people, provided that Humanity be free and happy.

We want good fortune for individuals, for everyone, without exception. We desire that each human being be able to develop themselves and live as happily as possible. And we believe that liberty and good fortune cannot be given to men by men or by a party, but that everyone must by themselves discover the conditions of their own freedom and conquer them. We believe that only the most complete application of the principle of solidarity can destroy struggle, oppression and exploitation and that solidarity can only be the result of free agreement, the spontaneous and intentional harmonization of interests.

For us, everything that seeks to destroy economic and political oppression, all that which serves to raise the moral and intellectual level of human beings, to give them the consciousness of their rights and of their forces and to persuade them to do their business by themselves, all that provokes hatred against oppression and love between people, brings us closer to our aim and as a consequence is good — subject only to a quantitative calculation in order to obtain from the given forces the maximum of useful effect. And to the contrary is evil, because it is in contradiction with that aim, all that which tends to sacrifice, against his will, a man to the triumph of a principle.

We desire the triumph of liberty and love.

But do we renounce for that the use of violent means? Not in the least. Our means are those that circumstances allow us and impose on us.

Certainly we don't want to harm a hair on anyone's head; we would like to dry all the tears and not to make any more be shed. But we must struggle in the world such as it is, or else remain sterile dreamers.

The day will come, we firmly believe, in which it will be possible to produce good for people without making evil for anyone. Today it is not possible. Even the purest and sweetest of the martyrs, those who are dragged to the scaffold for the triumph of good, without resistance, by blessing their persecutors like the Christ of legend, still make good from evil. Apart from the evil that they do to themselves, which must count for something, they causes all those who love them to shed bitter tears.

It is a question then, always, in all the acts of life, of choosing the least evil, of trying to make the least evil for the largest amount of human good.

Humanity drags painfully under the weight of political and economic oppression; it is brutalized, degenerated, killed (and not always slowly) by poverty, slavery, ignorance and their results.

For the defense of that state of things exist powerful military and police organizations, which respond by prison, the scaffold, and the massacre of every serious attempt at change. There are no peaceful, legal means, by which to depart from this situation, and that is natural because the law is made expressly by the privileged to defend privileges. Against the physical force which blocks our road, there is only violent revolution.

Obviously, the revolution will produce many misfortunes, many sufferings; but if it produced one hundred times more of them, it would still be a blessing relative to what one endures today.

We know that in a single great battle more people are killed than in the bloodiest of revolutions; we know the millions of children who die at an early age each year from lack of care; we know the millions of proletarians who die prematurely from the evil of poverty; we know the meager life, without joy and without hope, that the immense majority of people lead; we know that even the richest and most powerful are much less happy than they could be in a society of equals; and we know that that state of things has lasted since time immemorial. It will endure indefinitely without the revolution, while a single revolution, which resolutely attacked the causes of evil, could put humanity forever on the road to happiness.

Thus, let the revolution come; each day that it is delayed is an enormous mass of sufferings inflicted on us. Let us labor so that it comes quickly and is such as is necessary to put an end to all oppression and all exploitation.

It is from the love of humanity that we are revolutionaries: it is not our fault if history has forced on us this distressing necessity.

Thus for us, the anarchists, or at least (since in the end the words are only conventions) for those among the anarchists who see things

like us, every act of propaganda or of achievement, by word or by deed, individual or collective, is good when it serves to approach and facilitate the revolution, when it serves to insure to the revolution the conscious support of the masses and to give it that character of universal liberation, without which one could well have a revolution, but not the revolution that we desire. And it is especially with regard to revolution that we must take account of the principle of the most economical means, since here the expense is summed up in human lives.

We know too well the dreadful material and moral conditions in which the proletariat finds itself to not understand the acts of hate, of vengeance, even of ferocity which can be produced. We understand that there are some oppressed who, having always been treated by the bourgeois with the most shameful hardness, having always seen that everything was permitted to the strongest, one bright day, when they find themselves for a moment the strongest, say: "Let us also do as the bourgeois do." We understand that it can happen that in the fever of battle some natures — originally generous, but not prepared by a long moral exercise, very difficult in present conditions — lose sight of the end to be attained, take violence for the end in itself and allow themselves to be led to savage transports.

But it is one thing to understand and to pardon these acts, and another to claim them as our own. These are not acts that we can accept, encourage, and imitate. We must be resolute and energetic, but we must try never to pass beyond the limit marked by necessity. We must do as the surgeon who cuts when he must, but avoids inflicting unnecessary suffering: in a word, we must be inspired by the sentiment of love for people, for all people.

It appears to us that the sentiment of love is the moral source, the soul of our program: it appears to us that only by conceiving the revolution as the grand human jubilee, as the liberation and fraternization of all, no matter what class or what party they have belonged to, can our ideal be realized.

Brutal revolt will certainly be produced, and it could even serve to give the great helping hand which must shake the current system; but if it does not find the counterweight in revolutionaries who act for an ideal, it will devour itself.

Hate does not produce love; we will not renew the world by hate. And the revolution of hate will either fail completely, or else result in a new oppression, which could be called anarchist, as one calls the present governments liberal, but which will not be less an oppression and will not fail to produce the effects which produce all oppression.

The Duties of the Present Hour

Errico Malatesta

August 1894

REACTION IS LET LOOSE UPON US from all sides. The bourgeoisie, infuriated by the fear of losing their privileges, will use all means of repression to suppress not only the Anarchist and Socialist, but every progressive movement.

It is quite certain that they will not be able to prevent those outrages which served as the pretext of this present reaction; on the contrary, the measures which bar all other outlets to the active temper of some seem expressly calculated to provoke and multiply them.

But, unfortunately, it is not quite certain that they may not succeed in hampering our propaganda by rendering the circulation of our press very difficult, by imprisoning a great number of our comrades, and by leaving no other means of revolutionary activity open to us than secret meetings, which may be very useful for the actual execution of actions determined on, but which cannot make an idea enter into the mass of the proletariat.

We would be wrong to console ourselves with the old illusion that persecutions are always useful to the development of the ideas which are persecuted. This is wrong, as almost all generalizations are. Persecutions may help or hinder the triumph of a cause, according to the relation existing between the power of persecution and the power of resistance of the persecuted; and past history contains examples of persecutions which stopped and destroyed a movement as well as of others which brought about a revolution.

Hence we must face, without weakness or illusion, the situation into which the bourgeoisie has placed us today and study the means to resist the storm and to derive from it the greatest possible profit for our cause.

There are comrades who expect the triumph of our ideas from the multiplication of acts of individual violence. Well, we may differ in our opinions on the moral value and the practical effect of individual acts in general and of each act in particular, and there are in fa ct on this subject among Anarchists various divergent and even directly opposed currents of opinion; but one thing is certain, namely, that with a number of bombs and a number of blows of the knife, a society like bourgeois society cannot be overthrown, being based, as it is, on an enormous mass of private interests and prejudices, and sustained, more than it is by the force of arms, by the inertia of the masses and their habits of submission.

Other things are necessary to bring about a revolution, and specially the Anarchist revolution. It is necessary that the people be conscious of their rights and their strength; it is necessary that they be ready to fight and ready to take the conduct of their affairs into their own hands. It must be the constant preoccupation of the revolutionists, the point towards which all their activity must aim, to bring about this state of mind among the masses. The brilliant acts of a few individuals may help in this work, but cannot replace it, and in reality, they are only useful if they are the result of a collective movement of spirit of the masses, being accomplished under such circumstances that the masses understand them, sympathize with, and profit by them.

Who expects the emancipation of mankind to come, not from the persistent and harmonious co-operation of all men of progress, but from the accidental or providential happening of some acts of heroism, is not better advised than one who expects it from the intervention of an ingenious legislator or of a victorious general.

What have we to do in the present situation?

Before all, in my opinion, we must as much as possible resist the laws; I might almost say we must ignore them.

The degree of freedom, as well as the degree of exploitation under which we live, is not at all, or only in a small measure, dependent upon the letter of the law: it depends before all upon the resistance offered to the laws. One can be relatively free, notwithstanding the existence of draconian laws, provided custom is opposed to the government making use of them; while, on the other side, in spite of all guarantees granted by laws, one may be at the mercy of all the violence of the police, if they feel that they can, without being punished, make short work of the liberty of the citizens.

The results of the new laws which are being forged against us will depend to a large degree, upon our own attitude. If we offer energetic resistance, they will at once appear to public opinion as a shameless

violation of all human right and will be condemned to speedy extinction or to remain a dead letter. If, on the contrary, we accommodate ourselves to them, they will rank with contemporary political customs, which will, later on, have the disastrous result of giving fresh importance to the struggle for political liberties (of speaking, writing, meeting, combining, associating) and be the cause more or less of losing sight of the social question.

We are to be prevented from expressing our ideas: let us do so none the less and that more than ever. They want to proscribe the very name of Anarchist: let us shout aloud that we are Anarchists. The right of association is to be denied us: let us associate as we can, and proclaim that we are associated, and mean to be. This kind of action, I am quite aware, is not without difficulty in the state things are in at present, and can only be pursued within the limits and in the way which commonsense will dictate to everybody according to the different circumstances they live under. But let us always remember that the oppression of governments has no other limits than the resistance offered to it.

Those Socialists who imagine to escape the reaction by severing their cause from that of the Anarchists, not only give proof of a narrowness of view which is incompatible with aims of radical reorganization of the social system, but they betray stupidly their proper interest. If we should be crushed, their turn would come very soon.

But before all we must go among the people: this is the way of salvation for our cause.

While our ideas oblige us to put all our hopes in the masses, because we do not believe in the possibility of imposing the good by force and we do not want to be commanded, we have despised and neglected all manifestations of popular life; we contented ourselves with simply preaching abstract theories or with acts of individual revolt, and we have become isolated. Hence the want of success of what I will call, the first period of the Anarchist movement. After more than twenty years of propaganda and struggle, after so much devotion and so many martyrs, we are today nearly strangers to the great popular commotions which agitate Europe and America, and we find ourselves in a situation which permits the governments to foster, without plainly appearing absurd, hopes to suppress us by some police measures.

Let us reconsider our position.

Today, that which always ought to have been our duty, which was the logical outcome of our ideas, the condition which our conception of the revolution and reorganization of society imposes on us, namely, to live among the people and to win them over to our ideas by actively taking

part in their struggles and sufferings, today this has become an absolute necessity imposed upon us by the situation which we have to live under.

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Anarchy and Violence

Errico Malatesta

1894

From their first manifestations Anarchists have [been] nearly unanimous as to the necessity of recourse to physical force in order to transform existing society; and while the other self-styled revolutionary parties have gone floundering into the parliamentary slough, the anarchist idea has in some sort identified itself with that of armed insurrection and violent revolution.

But, perhaps, there has been no sufficient explanation as to the kind and the degree of violence to be employed; and here as in many other questions very dissimilar ideas and sentiments lurk under our common name.

As a fact, the numerous outrages which have lately been perpetrated by Anarchists and in the name of Anarchy, have brought to the light of day profound differences which had formerly been ignored, or scarcely foreseen.

Some comrades, disgusted at the atrocity and uselessness of certain of these acts, have declared themselves opposed to all violence whatever, except in cases of personal defence against direct and immediate attack. Which, in my opinion, would mean the renunciation of all revolutionary initiative, and the reserving of our blows for the petty, and often involuntary agents of the government, while leaving in peace the organizers of, and those chiefly benefited by, government and capitalist exploitation.

Other comrades, on the contrary, carried away by the excitement of the struggle, embittered by the infamies of the ruling class, and assuredly influenced by what has remained of the old Jacobin ideas permeating the political education of the present generation, have hastily

accepted any and every kind of violence, provided only that it be committed in the name of Anarchy; and they have claimed hardly less than the right of life and death over those who are not Anarchists, or who are not Anarchists exactly according to their pattern.

And the mass of the public, ignoring these polemics, and deceived by the capitalist press, see in Anarchy nothing but bombs and daggers, and habitually regard Anarchists as wild beasts thirsting for blood and ruin.

It is therefore needful that we explain ourselves very clearly as regards this question of violence, and that each one of us should take a position accordingly: needful both in the interests of the relations of practical co-operation which may exist among all those who profess Anarchism, as well as in the interests of the general propaganda, and of our relations with the public.

In my opinion, there can be no doubt that the Anarchist Idea, denying government, is by its very nature opposed to violence, which is the essence of every authoritarian system - the mode of action of every government.

Anarchy is freedom in solidarity. It is only through the harmonizing of interests, through voluntary co-operation, through love, respect, and reciprocal tolerance, by persuasion, by example, and by the contagion of benevolence, that it can and ought to triumph.

We are Anarchists, because we believe that we can never achieve the combined well-being of all - which is the aim of all our efforts - except through a free understanding among men, and without forcibly imposing the will of any upon any others.

In other parties there are certainly men who are as sincere and as devoted to the interests of the people as the best of us may be. But that which characterizes us Anarchists and distinguishes us from all others is that we do not believe ourselves in possession of absolute truth; we do not believe ourselves either infallible, or omniscient, - which is the implicit pretension of all legislators and political candidates whatever; and consequently we do not believe ourselves called for the direction and tutelage of the people.

We are, *par excellence*, the party of freedom, the party of free development, the party of social experimentation.

But against this very freedom which we claim for all, against the possibility of this experimental search after better forms of society, there are erected barriers of iron. Legions of soldiers and police are ready to massacre and imprison anyone who will not meekly submit to the laws which a handful of privileged persons have made in their own interests. And even if soldiers and police did not exist, yet so long as the economic constitution of society remains what it is, freedom would still be im-

possible; because, since all the means of life are under the control of a minority, the great mass of mankind is obliged to labour for the others, and themselves wallow in poverty and degradation.

The first thing to do, therefore, is to get rid of the armed force which defends existing institutions, and by means of the expropriation of the present holders, to place the land and the other means of production at the disposal of everybody. And this cannot possibly be done - in our opinion - without the employment of physical force. Moreover, the natural development of economic antagonisms, the waking consciousness of an important fraction of the proletariat, the constantly increasing number of unemployed, the blind resistance of the ruling classes, in short contemporary evolution as a whole, is conducting us inevitably towards the outbreak of a great revolution, which will overthrow everything by its violence, and the fore-running signs of which are already visible. This revolution will happen, with us or without us; and the existence of a revolutionary party, conscious of the end to be attained, will serve to give a useful direction to the violence, and to moderate its excesses by the influence of a lofty ideal.

Thus it is that we are revolutionists. In this sense, and within these limits, violence is not a contradiction with Anarchist principles, since it is not the result of our free choice, but is imposed upon us by necessity in the defence of unrecognized human rights which are thwarted by brute force.

I repeat here: as Anarchists, we cannot and we do not desire to employ violence, except in the defence of ourselves and others against oppression. But we claim this right of defence - entire, real, and efficacious. That is, we wish to be able to go behind the material instrument which wounds us, and to attack the hand which wields the instrument, and the head which directs it. And we wish to choose our own hour and field of battle, so as to attack the enemy under conditions as favourable as possible: whether it be when he is actually attacking and provoking us, or at times when he slumbers, and relaxes his hand, counting on popular submission. For as a fact, the bourgeoisie is in a permanent state of war against the proletariat, since it never for one moment ceases to exploit the latter, and grind it down.

Unfortunately, among the acts which have been committed in the name of Anarchy, there have been some, which, though wholly lacking in Anarchist characteristics, have been wrongly confounded with other acts of obviously Anarchist inspiration.

For my part, I protest against this confusion between acts wholly different in moral value, as well as in practical effects.

Despite the excommunication and insults of certain people, I consider it an essential point to discriminate between the heroic act of a man who consciously sacrifices his life for that which he believes will do good, and the almost involuntary act of some unhappy man whom society has reduced to despair, or the savage act of a man who has been driven astray by suffering, and has caught the contagion of this civilised savagery which surrounds us all; between the intelligent act of a man who, before acting, weighs the probable good or evil that may result for his cause, and the thoughtless act of the man who strikes at random; between the generous act of one who exposes himself to danger in order to spare suffering to his fellows, and the bourgeois act of one who brings suffering upon others for his own advantage; between the anarchist act of one who desires to destroy the obstacles that stand in the way of the reconstitution of society on a basis of free agreement of all, and the authoritarian act of the man who intends to punish the crowd for its stupidity, to terrorise it (which makes it still more stupid) and to impose his own ideas upon it.

Most assuredly the *bourgeoisie* has no right to complain of the violence of its foes, since its whole history, as a class, is a history of bloodshed, and since the system of exploitation, which is the law of its life, daily produces hecatombs of innocents. Assuredly, too, it is not political parties who should complain of violence, for these are, on and all, red-handed with blood spilt unnecessarily, and wholly in their own interest; these, who have brought up the young, generation after generation, in the cult of force triumphant; these, who when they are not actual apologists of the Inquisition, are yet enthusiastic admirers of that Red Terror, which checked the splendid revolutionary impulse at the end of the last century, and prepared the way for the Empire, for the Restoration, and the White Terror.

The fit of mildness which has come over certain of the bourgeois, now that their lives and their purses are menaced, is, in our opinion, extremely untrustworthy. But it is not for us to regulate our conduct by the amount of pleasure or vexation which it may occasion the bourgeoisie. We have to conduct ourselves according to our principles; and the interest of our cause, which in our view is the cause of all humanity.

Since historical antecedents have driven us to the necessity of violence, let us employ violence; but let us never forget that it is a case of hard necessity, and in its essence contrary to our aspirations. Let us not forget that all history witnesses to the distressing fact - whenever resistance to oppression has been victorious it has always engendered new oppression, and it warns us that it must ever be so until the bloody tradition of

the past be for ever broken with, and violence be limited to the strictest necessity.

Violence begets violence; and authoritarianism begets oppression and slavery. The good intentions of individuals can in no way affect this sequence. The fanatic who tells himself that he will save people by force, and in his own manner, is always a sincere man, but a terrible agent of oppression and reaction. Robespierre, with horrible good faith and his conscience pure and cruel, was just as fatal for the Revolution as the personal ambition of Bonaparte. The ardent zeal of Torquemada for the salvation of souls did much more harm to freedom of thought and to the progress of the human mind than the scepticism and corruption of Leo X and his court.

Theories, declarations of principle, or magnanimous words can do nothing against the natural filiation of facts. Many martyrs have died for freedom, many battles have been fought and won in the name of the welfare of all mankind, and yet the freedom has turned out after all to mean nothing but the unlimited oppression and exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The Anarchist idea is no more secured from corruption than the Liberal idea has proved to be, yet the beginnings of corruption may be already observed if we note the contempt for the masses which is exhibited by certain Anarchists, their intolerance, and their desire to spread terror around them.

Anarchists! let us save Anarchy! Our doctrine is a doctrine of love. We cannot, and we ought not to be either avengers, nor dispensers of justice. Our task, our ambition, our ideal is to be deliverers.

An Errico Malatesta Reader: The Method of Freedom

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Violence as a Social Factor

Errico Malatesta

April 1895

VIOLENCE, I.E., PHYSICAL FORCE used to another's hurt, which is the most brutal form the struggle between men can assume, is eminently corrupting. It tends, by its very nature, to suffocate the best sentiments of man, and to develop all the anti-social qualities: ferocity, hatred, revenge, the spirit of domination and tyranny, contempt of the weak, servility towards the strong.

And this harmful tendency arises also when violence is used for a good end. The love of justice which impelled one to the struggle, amid all the good original intentions, is not sufficient guarantee against the depraving influence exerted by violence on the mind and actions of him who uses it. In the whirl of battle one too often loses sight of the goal for which one fights, and one only thinks of returning, a hundred-fold if possible, the blows received; and when at last victory crowns the efforts of the party who fought for justice and humanity it is already corrupt and incapable of realizing the program by which it was inspired.

How many men who enter on a political struggle inspired with the love of humanity, of liberty, and of toleration, end by becoming cruel and inexorable proscribers.

How many sects have started with the idea of doing a work of justice in punishing some oppressor whom official "justice" could not or would not strike, have ended by becoming the instruments of private vengeance and base cupidity.

And the Anarchists who rebel against every sort of oppression and struggle for the integral liberty of each and who ought thus to shrink instinctively from all acts of violence which cease to be mere resistance to oppression and become oppressive in their turn . .. also are liable to fall into the abyss of brutal force.

Facts have proved that the Anarchists are not free from the errors and faults of authoritarian parties, and that, in their case as in that of the rest of humanity, atavistic instincts and the influence of the environment are often stronger than the best theories and noblest intentions.

The excitement caused by some recent explosions and the admiration for the courage with which the bomb-throwers faced death, sufficed to cause many Anarchists to forget their program, and to enter on a path which is the most absolute negation of all anarchist ideas and sentiments.

Hatred and revenge seemed to have become the moral basis of Anarchism. "The bourgeoisie does as bad and worse." Such is the argument with which they tried to justify and exalt every brutal deed.

"The masses are brutalized; we must force our ideas on them by violence." "One has the right to kill those who preach false theories." "The masses allow us to be oppressed; let us revenge ourselves on the masses." "The more workers one kills the fewer slaves remain." Such are the ideas current in certain Anarchist circles. An Anarchist review, in a controversy on the different tendencies of the Anarchist movement, replied to a comrade with this unanswerable argument: "There will be bombs for you also."

It is true that these ultra-authoritarians, who so strangely persist in calling themselves Anarchists, are but a small fraction who acquired a momentary importance owing to exceptional circumstances. But we must remember that, generally speaking, they entered the movement inspired with those feelings of love and respect for the liberty of others which distinguish the true Anarchist, and only in consequence of a sort of moral intoxication produced by the violent struggle, they got to defend and extol acts and maxims worthy of the greatest tyrants. Nor must we forget that we have all, or nearly all, run the same danger, and that if most of us have stopped in time it is perhaps due to these mad exaggerations which have shown us beforehand into what an abyss we were in danger of falling.

Thus the danger of being corrupted by the use of violence, and of despising the people, and becoming cruel as well as fanatical persecutors, exists for all. And if in the coming revolution this moral degradation of the Anarchists were to prevail on a large scale, what would become of Anarchist ideas? And what would be the outcome of the Revolution?

Let us not consider humanity as a metaphysical conception devoid of reality, and let us not transform the love of others into a continuous, absurd, and impossible self-sacrifice.

Humanity is the slim total of human units, and everyone who defends in himself those rights which he recognizes in others, defends them to the advantage of all.

Altruism cannot go beyond loving others as one loves oneself, otherwise it ceases to be a practical reality, and becomes a misty idea which may attract some minds inclined to mysticism, but can certainly not become a moral law to be lived up to.

The object of the ideally moral man is that all men may have as little suffering and as such joy as possible.

Supposing the predominant instinct of self-preservation be eliminated, the mo.-al man, when obliged to fight, should act in such fashion that the total ill inflicted on the diverse combatants be as small as possible. Consequently he should not do another a great evil to avoid suffering a smaIl one. For instance he should not kill a man to avoid being punched; but he would not hesitate to break his legs if he could not do otherwise to prevent his killing him. And when it is a question of like evils, such as killing so as not to be killed, even then it seems to me that it is an advantage to society that the aggressor should die rather than the aggressed.

But if self-defence is a right one may renounce, the defence of others at the risk of hurting the aggressor is a duty of solidarity.

Is it true that the masses can emancipate themselves today without resorting to violent means?

Today, above the great majority of mankind who derive a scanty livelihood by their labour or who die through want of work, there exists a privileged class, who, having monopolized the means of existence and the management of social interests, shamefully exploit the former and deny the latter the means of work and life. This class, who are influenced solely by a thirst for power and profit, show no inclination (as facts prove) to voluntarily renounce their privileges, and to merge their private interests in the common good. On the contrary, it is ever arming itself with more powerful means of repression, and systematically uses violence not only to check every direct attack on their privileges, but also to crush in the bud every movement, every pacific organization, whose growth might endanger their power.

What means does Bell advise for getting out of this situation?

Propaganda, organization, moral resistance? Certainly these are the essential factors in social evolution, and it is from them that we must start, and without these revolutionary violence would be senseless, nay impossible.

BeIl admits the right of the workers to break in the doors of a factory in order to seize the machinery, but he does not recognize their right to in-

jure the factory-owner. And in this he is right if the owner should allow the workers to proceed without opposing them with force. But unfortunately the policemen will come with their truncheons and revolvers. What should the workers do then? Should they allow themselves to be taken and sent to prison? That is a game one soon gets tired of.

Bell certainly admits that the workers have the right to organize for the defeat of the bourgeoisie by means of a general strike. But what if the government sends down soldiers to slaughter them? Or what if the bourgeoisie, which after all can afford to wait, holds out? It will be absolutely necessary for the strikers, if they do not wish to be starved out at the end of the second day, to seize on food wherever they can find it, and as it will not be given up to them without resistance, they will be obliged to take it by force. So they will either have to fight or consider themselves as conquered.

In reality Bell's error consists in this, that while discussing the methods of attaining an ideal he presupposes that the ideal is already attained.

If it were really possible to progress peacefully, if the partisans of a social system different to that which we desire did not force us to submit to it, then we might say that we were living under Anarchy.

For, what is Anarchy? We do not wish to impose on others any hard and fast system, nor do we pretend, at least I do not, to possess the secret of a perfect social system. We wish that each social group be able, within the limits imposed by the liberty of others, to experiment on the mode of life which it believes to be the best, and we believe in the efficacy of persuasion and example. If society did not deny us this right we should have no right to complain, and we would simply have to strive to make our system the most successful, so as to prove that it was the better. It is only because today one class has the monopoly of power and riches, and is therefore able to force the people, at the end of a bayonet, to work for it, that we have the right, and that it is our duty, to fight for attaining, with the aid of force, those conditions which render it possible to experiment on better forms of society.

In short it is our duty to call attention to the dangers attendant on the use of violence, to insist on the principle of the inviolability of human life, to combat the spirit of hatred and revenge, and to preach love and toleration. But to blind ourselves to the true conditions of the struggle, to renounce the use of force for the purpose of repelling and attacking force, relying on the fanciful efficacy of "passive resistance," and in the name of a mystical morality to deny the right of self-defence, or to restrain it to the point of rendering it illusionary, can only end in nothing, or in leaving a free field of action to the oppressors.

If we really wish to strive for the emancipation of the people, do not let us reject in principle the means without which the struggle can never be ended; and, remember, the most energetic measures are also the most efficient and the least wasteful. Only do not let us lose sight of the fa ct that ours is a struggle inspired by love and not by hatred, and that it is our duty to do all in our power to see that the necessary violence does not degenerate into mere ferocity, and that it be used only as a weapon in the struggle of right against wrong.

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Anarchism and Organization

Errico Malatesta

1897

Organization which is, after all, only the practice of cooperation and solidarity, is a natural and necessary condition of social life; it is an inescapable fact which forces itself on everybody, as much on human society in general as on any group of people who are working towards a common objective. Since humanity neither wishes to, nor can, live in isolation it is inevitable that those people who have neither the means, nor a sufficiently developed social conscience to permit them to associate freely with those of a like mind and with common interests, are subjected to the organization by others, generally constituted in a class or as a ruling group, with the aim of exploiting the labor of others for their personal advantage. And the agelong oppression of the masses by a small privileged group has always been the result of the inability of the oppressed to agree among themselves to organize with others for production, for enjoyment and for the possible needs of defense against whoever might wish to exploit and oppress them. Anarchism exists to remedy this state of affairs ...

Now, it seems to us that organization, that is to say, association for a specific purpose and with the structure and means required to attain it, is a necessary aspect of social life. A human being in isolation cannot even live the life of a beast, for they would be unable to obtain nourishment for themselves, except perhaps in tropical regions or when the population is exceptionally sparse; and they would be, without exception, unable to rise much above the level of an animal. Having therefore to join with other humans, or more accurately, finding themselves united to them as a consequence of the evolutionary antecedents of the species, they must submit to the will of others (be enslaved) or subject others to his/her will (be in authority) or live with others in fraternal

agreement in the interests of the greatest good of all (be an associate). Nobody can escape from this necessity.

Admitting as a possibility the existence of a community organized without authority, that is without compulsion — and anarchists must admit the possibility, or anarchism would have no meaning — let us pass on to discuss the organization of the anarchist movement.

In this case too, organization seems useful and necessary. If a movement means the whole — individuals with a common objective which they exert themselves to attain — it is natural that they should agree among themselves, join forces, share out the tasks and take all those steps which they think will lead to the achievement of those objectives. To remain isolated, each individual acting or seeking to act on their own without coordination, without preparation, without their modest efforts to a strong group, means condemning oneself to impotence, wasting one's efforts in small ineffectual action, and to lose faith very soon in one's aims and possibly being reduced to complete inactivity.

A mathematician, a chemist, a psychologist or a sociologist may say they have no programme or are concerned only with establishing the truth. They seek knowledge, they are not seeking to do something. But anarchism and socialism are not sciences; they are proposals, projects, that anarchists and socialists seek to realize and which, therefore need to be formulated as definite programs.

If it is true that organization creates leaders; if it is true that anarchists are unable to come together and arrive at an agreement without submitting themselves to an authority, this means that they are not yet very good anarchists, and before thinking of establishing an anarchist society within the world they must think of making themselves able to live anarchistically. The remedy does not lie in the abolition of organization but in the growing consciousness of each individual member. In small as well as large societies, apart from brute force, of which it cannot be a question for us, the origin and justification for authority lies in social disorganization.

When a community has needs and its members do not know how to organize spontaneously to provide them, someone comes forward, an authority who satisfies those needs by utilizing the services of all and directing them to their liking. If the roads are unsafe and the people do not know what measures to take, a police force emerges which in return for whatever services it renders expects to be supported and paid, as well as imposing itself and throwing its weight around; if some article is needed, and the community does not know how to arrange with the distant producers to supply it in exchange for goods produced locally, the merchant will appear who will profit by dealing with the needs of

one section to sell and of the other to buy, and impose his/her own prices both on the producer and the consumer. This is what has happened in our midst; the less organized we have been, the more prone are we to be imposed on by a few individuals. And this is understandable. So much so that organization, far from creating authority, is the only cure for it and the only means whereby each one of us will get used to taking an active and conscious part in the collective work, and cease being passive instruments in the hands of leaders.

But an organization, it is argued, presupposes an obligation to coordinate one's own activities with those of others; thus it violates liberty and fetters initiative. As we see it, what really takes away liberty and makes initiative impossible is the isolation which renders it powerless. Freedom is not an abstract right but the possibility of acting; this is true among ourselves as well as society as a whole. And it is by cooperation with our fellow human beings that we find the means to express our activity and our power of initiative.

An anarchist organization must allow for complete autonomy, and independence, and therefore full responsibility, to individuals and groups; free agreement between those who think it useful to come together for cooperative action, for common aims; a moral duty to fulfill one's pledges and to take no action which is contrary to the accepted programme. On such bases one then introduces practical forms and suitable instruments to give real life to the organization. Thus the groups, the federation of groups, the federations of federations, meetings, congresses, correspondence committees and so on. But this also must be done freely, in such a way as not to restrict the thought and the initiative of individual members, but only to give greater scope to the efforts which in isolation would be impossible or ineffective. Thus for an anarchist organization congress, in spite of all the disadvantages from which they suffer as representative bodies, are free from authoritarianism in any shape or form because they do not legislate and do not impose their deliberations on others. They serve to maintain and increase personal contacts among the most active comrades, to summarize and encourage programmatic studies on the ways and means for action; to acquaint everybody with the situation in the regions and the kind of action most urgently needed; to summarize the various currents of anarchist opinions at the time and to prepare some kind of statistics therefrom. And their decisions are not binding, but simply suggestions, advice and proposals to submit to all concerned, and they do not become binding and executive except for those who accept them and for as long as they accept them. The administrative organs they nominate — Correspondence Commissions, etc. — have no directive

powers, do not take initiatives except for those who specifically solicit and approve of them, and have no authority to impose their own views, which they can certainly hold and propagate as groups of comrades, but which cannot be presented as the official views of the organization. They publish the resolutions of the congresses and the opinions and proposals communicated to them by groups and individuals; and they act for those who want to make use of them, to facilitate relations between groups, and cooperation between those who are in agreement on various initiatives; each is free to correspond with whoever he/she likes direct, or make use of the other committees nominated by specific groupings.

In an anarchist organization individual members can express any opinion and use every tactic which is not in contradiction with the accepted principles and does not interfere with the activities of others. In every case a particular organization last so long as the reasons for union are superior to those for dissension; otherwise it disbands and makes way for other, more homogenous groupings. Certainly the life and permanence of an organization is a condition for success in the long struggle before us, and besides, it is natural that every institution should by instinct aim at lasting indefinitely. But the duration of a libertarian organization must be the result of the spiritual affinity of its members and of the adaptability of its constitution to the continually changing circumstances. When it can no longer serve a useful purpose it is better that it should die.

We would certainly be happy if we could all get along well together and unite all the forces of anarchism in a strong movement; but we do not believe in the solidity of organizations which are built on concessions and assumptions and in which there is no real agreement and sympathy between members. Better disunited than badly united. But we would wish that each individual joined their friends and that there should be no isolated forces, or lost forces.

It remains for us to speak of the organization of the working and oppressed masses for resistance against both the government and the employers. Workers will never be able to emancipate themselves so long as they do not find in union the moral, economic and physical strength that is needed to subdue the organized might of the oppressors.

There have been anarchists, and there still are some, who while recognizing the need to organize today for propaganda and action, are hostile to all organizations which do not have anarchism as their goal or which do not follow anarchist methods of struggle. To those comrades it seemed that all organized forces for an objective less than radically revolutionary, were forces that the revolution was being deprived of. It

seems to us instead, and experience has surely already confirmed our view, that their approach would condemn the anarchist movement to a state of perpetual sterility. To make propaganda we must be amongst the people, and it is in the workers' associations that workers find their comrades and especially those who are most disposed to understand and accept our ideas. But even when it is possible to do as much propaganda as we wished outside the associations, this could not have a noticeable effect on the working masses. Apart from a small number of individuals more educated and capable of abstract thought and theoretical enthusiasms, the worker cannot arrive at anarchism in one leap. To become an convinced anarchist, and not in name only, they must begin to feel the solidarity that joins them to their comrades, and to learn to cooperate with others in defense of common interests and that, by struggling against the bosses and against the government that supports them, should realize that bosses and governments are useless parasites and that the workers could manage the domestic economy by their own efforts. And when the worker has understood this, he or she is an anarchist even if they do not refer to themselves as such.

Furthermore, to encourage popular organizations of all kinds is the logical consequence of our basic ideas, and should therefore be an integral part of our programme. An authoritarian party, which aims at capturing power to impose its ideas, has an interest in the people remaining an amorphous mass, unable to act for themselves and therefore always easily dominated. And it follows, logically, that it cannot desire more than that much organization, and of the kind it needs to attain power: Electoral organizations if it hopes to achieve it by legal means; Military organization if it relies on violent action. But we anarchists do not want to emancipate the people; we want the people to emancipate themselves. We do not believe in the good that comes from above and imposed by force; we want the new way of life to emerge from the body of the people and correspond to the state of their development and advance as they advance. It matters to us therefore that all interests and opinions should find their expression in a conscious organization and should influence communal life in proportion to their importance.

We have undertaken the task of struggling against existing social organization, and of overcoming the obstacles to the advent of a new society in which freedom and well being would be assured to everybody. To achieve this objective we organize ourselves and seek to become as numerous and as strong as possible. But if it were only our anarchist groupings that were organized; if the workers were to remain isolated like so many units unconcerned about each other and only linked by the common chain; if we ourselves besides being organized as anarchists

in a federation, were not as workers organized with other workers, we could achieve nothing at all, or at most, we might be able to impose ourselves … and then it would not be the triumph of anarchism, but our triumph. We could then go on calling ourselves anarchists, but in reality we should simply be rulers, and as impotent as all rulers are where the general good is concerned.

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Towards Anarchism

Errico Malatesta

December 9th, 1899

It is a general opinion that we, because we call ourselves revolutionists, expect Anarchism to come with one stroke — as the immediate result of an insurrection which violently attacks all that which exists and which replaces all with institutions that are really new. And to tell the truth this idea is not lacking among some comrades who also conceive the revolution in such a manner.

This prejudice explains why so many honest opponents believe Anarchism a thing impossible; and it also explains why some comrades, disgusted with the present moral condition of the people and seeing that Anarchism cannot come about soon, waver between an extreme dogmatism which blinds them to the realities of life and an opportunism which practically makes them forget that they are Anarchists and that for Anarchism they should struggle.

Of course the triumph of Anarchism cannot be the consequence of a miracle; it cannot come about in contradiction to the laws of development (an axiom of evolution that nothing occurs without sufficient cause), and nothing can be accomplished without adequate means.

If we should want to substitute one government for another, that is, impose our desires upon others, it would only be necessary to combine the material forces needed to resist the actual oppressors and put ourselves in their place.

But we do not want this; we want Anarchism which is a society based on free and voluntary accord — a society in which no one can force his wishes on another and in which everyone can do as he pleases and together all will voluntarily contribute to the well-being of the community. But because of this Anarchism will not have definitively and universally triumphed until all men will not only not want to be commanded but

will not want to command; nor will Anarchism have succeeded unless they will have understood the advantage of solidarity and know how to organise a plan of social life wherein there will no longer be traces of violence and imposition. And as the conscience, determination, and capacity of men continuously develop and find means of expression in the gradual modification of the new environment and in the realisation of the desires in proportion to their being formed and becoming imperious, so it is with Anarchism; Anarchism cannot come but little by little slowly, but surely, growing in intensity and extension.

Therefore, the subject is not whether we accomplish Anarchism today, tomorrow, or within ten centuries, but that we walk towards Anarchism today, tomorrow, and always.

Anarchism is the abolition of exploitation and oppression of man by man, that is, the abolition of private property and government; Anarchism is the destruction of misery, of superstitions, of hatred. Therefore, every blow given to the institutions of private property and to the government, every exaltation of the conscience of man, every disruption of the present conditions, every lie unmasked, every part of human activity taken away from the control of the authorities, every augmentation of the spirit of solidarity and initiative, is a step towards Anarchism.

The problem lies in knowing how to choose the road that really approaches the realisation of the ideal and in not confusing the real progress with hypocritical reforms. For with the pretext of obtaining immediate ameliorations these false reforms tend to distract the masses from the struggle against authority and capitalism; they serve to paralyse their actions and make them hope that something can be attained through the kindness of the exploiters and governments. The problem lies in knowing how to use the little power we have — that we go on achieving, in the most economical way, more prestige for our goal.

There is in every country a government which, with brutal force, imposes its laws on all; it compels all to be subjected to exploitation and to maintain, whether they like it or not, the existing institutions. It forbids the minority groups to actuate their ideas, and prevents the social organisations in general from modifying themselves according to, and with, the modifications of public opinion. The normal peaceful course of evolution is arrested by violence, and thus with violence it is necessary to reopen that course. It is for this reason that we want a violent revolution today; and we shall want it always — so long as man is subject to the imposition of things contrary to his natural desires. Take away the governmental violence and ours would have no reason to exist.

We cannot as yet overthrow the prevailing government; perhaps tomorrow from the ruins of the present government we cannot prevent the arising of another similar one. But this does not hinder us, nor will it tomorrow, from resisting whatever form of authority — refusing always to submit to its laws whenever possible, and constantly using force to oppose force.

Every weakening of whatever kind of authority, each accession of liberty will be a progress towards Anarchism; always it should be conquered — never asked for; always it should serve to give us greater strength in the struggle; always it should make us consider the state as an enemy with whom we should never make peace; always it should make us remember well that the decrease of the ills produced by the government consists in the decrease of its attributions and powers, and the resulting terms should be determined not by those who governed but by those were governed. By government we mean any person or group of persons in the state, country, community, or association who has the right to make laws and inflict them upon those who do not want them.

We cannot as yet abolish private property; we cannot regulate the means of production which is necessary to work freely; perhaps we shall not be able to do so in the next insurrectional movement. But this does not prevent us now, or will it in the future, from continually opposing capitalism or any other form of despotism. And each victory, however small, gained by the workers against their exploiters, each decrease of profit, every bit of wealth taken from the individual owners and put at the disposal of all, shall be a progress — a forward step towards Anarchism. Always it should serve to enlarge the claims of the workers and to intensify the struggle; always it should be accepted as a victory over an enemy and not as a concession for which we should be thankful; always we should remain firm in our resolution to take with force, as soon as it will be possible, those means which the private owners, protected by the government, have stolen from the workers.

The right of force having disappeared, the means of production being placed under the management of whoever wants to produce, the result must be the fruit of a peaceful evolution.

Anarchism could not be, nor would it ever be if not for these few who want it and want it only in those things they can accomplish without the co-operation of the non-anarchists. This does not necessarily mean that the ideal of Anarchism will make little or no progress, for little by little its ideas will extend to more men and more things until it will have embraced all mankind and all life's manifestations.

Having overthrown the government and all the existing dangerous institutions which with force it defends, having conquered complete free-

dom for all and with it the means of regulating labour without which liberty would be a lie, and while we are struggling to arrive at this point, we do not intend to destroy those things which we little by little will reconstruct.

For example, there functions in the present society the service of supplying food. This is being done badly, chaotically, with great waste of energy and material and with capitalist interests in view; but after all, one way or another we must eat. It would be absurd to want to disorganise the system of producing and distributing food unless we could substitute for it something better and more just.

There exists a postal service. We have thousands of criticisms to make, but in the meantime we use it to send our letters, and shall continue to use it, suffering all its faults, until we shall be able to correct or replace it.

There are schools, but how badly they function. But because of this we do not allow our children to remain in ignorance — refusing their learning to read and write.

Meanwhile we wait and struggle for a time when we shall be able to organise a system of model schools to accommodate all.

From this we can see that, to arrive at Anarchism, material force is not the only thing to make a revolution; it is essential that the workers, grouped according to the various branches of production, place themselves in a position that will insure the proper functioning of their social life — without the aid or need of capitalists or governments.

And we see also that the Anarchist ideals are far from being in contradiction, as the "scientific socialists" claim, to the laws of evolution as proved by science; they are a conception which fits these laws perfectly; they are the experimental system brought from the field of research to that of social realisation.

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Anarchy and Organization: The Debate at the 1907 International Anarchist Congress

Various Authors

1907

Amédée Dunois: Anarchism and Organization

It is not long since our comrades were almost unanimous in their clear hostility towards any idea of organization. The question we are dealing with today would, then, have raised endless protests from them, and its supporters would have been vehemently accused of a hidden agenda and authoritarianism.

They were times when anarchists, isolated from each other and even more so from the working class, seemed to have lost all social feeling; in which anarchists, with their unceasing appeals for the spiritual liberation of the individual, were seen as the supreme manifestation of the old individualism of the great bourgeois theoreticians of the past.

Individual actions and individual initiative were thought to suffice for everything; and they applauded [Ibsen's play] "An Enemy of the People" when it declared that a man alone is the most powerful of all. But they did not think of one thing: that Ibsen's concept was never that of a revolutionary, in the sense that we give this word, but of a moralist primarily concerned with establishing a new moral elite within the very breast of the old society.

In past years, generally speaking, little attention was paid to studying the concrete matters of economic life, of the various phenomena of production and exchange, and some of our people, whose race has not yet disappeared, went so far as to deny the existence of that basic phenomenon — the class struggle — to the point of no longer distinguishing in the present society, in the manner of the pure democrats, anything except differences of opinion, which anarchist propaganda had to prepare individuals for, as a way of training them for theoretical discussion.

In its origins, anarchism was nothing more than a concrete protest against opportunist tendencies and social democracy's authoritarian way of acting; and in this regard it can be said to have carried out a useful function in the social movement of the past twenty-five years. If socialism as a whole, as a revolutionary idea, has survived the progressive bourgeoisification of social democracy, it is undoubtedly due to the anarchists.

Why have anarchists not been content to support the principle of socialism and federalism against the bare-faced deviations of the [social democratic] cavaliers of the conquest of political power? Why has time brought them to the ambition of re-building a whole new ideology all over again, faced with parliamentary and reformist socialism?

We cannot but recognize it: this ideological attempt was not always an easy one. More often than not we have limited ourselves to consigning to the flames that which social democracy worshipped, and to worshipping that which burned. That is how unwittingly and without even realizing it, so many anarchists were able to lose sight of the essentially practical and working class nature of socialism in general and anarchism in particular, neither of which have ever been anything other than the theoretical expression of the spontaneous resistance of the workers against the oppression by the bourgeois regime. It happened to the anarchists as it happened to German philosophical socialism before 1848 — as we can read in the [Marx & Engels'] *Communist Manifesto* — which prided itself on being able to remain "in contempt of all class struggles," defending "not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy".

Thus, many of our people came back curiously towards idealism on the one hand and individualism on the other. And there was renewed interest in the old 1848 themes of justice, liberty, brotherhood and the emancipatory omnipotence of the Idea of the world. At the same time the Individual was exalted, in the English manner, against the State and any form of organization came, more or less openly, to be viewed as a form of oppression and mental exploitation.

Certainly, this state of mind was never absolutely unanimous. But that does not take away from the fact that it is responsible, for the most part, for the absence of an organized, coherent anarchist movement. The exaggerated fear of alienating our own free wills at the hands of some new collective body stopped us above all from uniting.

It is true that there existed among us "social study groups", but we know how ephemeral and precarious they were: born out of individual caprice, these groups were destined to disappear with it; those who made them up did not feel united enough, and the first difficulty they encountered caused them to split up. Furthermore, these groups do not seem to have ever had a clear notion of their goal. Now, the goal of an organization is at one and the same time thought and action. In my experience, however, those groups did not act at all: they disputed. And many reproached them for building all those little chapels, those talking shops.

What lies at the root of the fact that anarchist opinion now seems to be changing with regard to the question of organization?

There are two reasons for this:

The first is the example from abroad. There are small permanent organizations in England, Holland, Germany, Bohemia, Romandie and Italy

which have been operating for several years now, without the anarchist idea having visibly suffered for this. It is true that in France we do not have a great deal of information on the constitution and life of these organizations; it would be desirable to investigate this.

The second cause is much more important. It consists of the decisive evolution that the minds and practical habits of anarchists have been undergoing more or less everywhere for the last seven years or so, which has led them to join the workers' movement actively and participate in the people's lives.

In a word, we have overcome the gap between the pure idea, which can so easily turn into dogma, and real life.

The basic result of this has been that we have become less and less interested in the sociological abstractions of yore and more and more interested in the practical movement, in action. Proof is the great importance that revolutionary syndicalism and anti-militarism, for example, have acquired for us in recent years.

Another result of our participation in the movement, also very important, has been that theoretical anarchism itself has gradually sharpened itself and become alive through contact with real life, that eternal fountain of thought. Anarchism in our eyes is no longer a general conception of the world, an ideal for existence, a rebellion of the spirit against everything that is foul, impure and beastly in life; it is also and above all a revolutionary theory, a concrete programme of destruction and social re-organization. Revolutionary anarchism — and I emphasize the word "revolutionary" — essentially seeks to participate in the spontaneous movement of the masses, working towards what Kropotkin so neatly called the "Conquest of Bread"

Now, it is only from the point of view of revolutionary anarchism that the question of anarchist organization can be dealt with.

The enemies of organization today are of two sorts.

Firstly, there are those who are obstinately and systematically hostile to any sort of organization. They are the individualists. There can be found among them the idea popularized by Rousseau that society is evil, that it is always a limitation on the independence of the individual. The smallest amount of society possible, or no society at all: that is their dream, an absurd dream, a romantic dream that brings us back to the strangest follies of Rousseau's literature.

Do we need to say and to demonstrate that anarchism is not individualism, then? Historically speaking, anarchism was born, through the development of socialism, in the congresses of the International, in other words, from the workers' movement itself. And in fact, logically, anarchy means society organized without political authority. I said *organized*.

On this point all the anarchists — Proudhon, Bakunin, those of the Jura Federation, Kropotkin — are in agreement. Far from treating organization and government as equal, Proudhon never ceased to emphasize their incompatibility: "The producer is incompatible with government," he says in the *General Idea of the Revolution in the 19th Century*, "organization is opposed to government".

Even Marx himself, whose disciples now seek to hide the anarchist side to his doctrine, defined anarchy thus: "All Socialists understand by Anarchy the following: that once the goal of the proletarian movement — the abolition of classes — is reached, the power of the State — which serves to maintain the large producing majority under the yoke of a small exploiting minority — disappears and the functions of government are transformed into simple administrative functions". In other words, anarchy is not the negation of organization but only of the governing function of the power of the State.

No, anarchism is not individualist, but basically federalist. Federalism is essential to anarchism: it is in fact the very essence of anarchism. I would happily define anarchism as complete federalism, the universal extension of the idea of the free contract.

After all, I cannot see how an anarchist organization could damage the individual development of its members. No one would be forced to join, just as no one would be forced to leave once they had joined. So what is an anarchist federation? Several comrades from a particular region, Romandie for example, having established the impotence of isolated forces, of piecemeal action, agree one fine day to remain in continuing contact with each other, to unite their forces with the aim of working to spread communist, anarchist and revolutionary ideas and of participating in public events through their collective action. Do they thus create a new entity whose designated prey is the individual? By no means. They very simply, and for a precise goal, band together their ideas, their will and their forces, and from the resulting collective potentiality, each gains some advantage.

But we also have, as I said earlier, another sort of adversary. They are those who, despite being supporters of workers' organizations founded on an identity of interests, prove to be hostile — or at least indifferent — to any organization based on an identity of aspirations, feelings and principles; they are, in a word, the [pure] syndicalists.

Let us examine their objections. The existence in France of a workers' movement with a revolutionary and almost anarchist outlook is, in that country, currently the greatest obstacle that any attempt at anarchist organization risks foundering on — I do not wish to say being wrecked

on. And this important historical fact imposes certain precautions on us, which do not affect, in my opinion, our comrades in other countries.

The workers' movement today, the syndicalists observe, offers anarchists an almost unlimited field of action. Whereas idea-based groups, little sanctuaries into which only the initiated may enter, cannot hope to grow indefinitely, the workers' organization, on the other hand, is a widely accessible association; it is not a temple whose doors are closed, but a public arena, a forum open to all workers without distinction of sex, race or ideology, and therefore perfectly adapted to encompassing the whole proletariat within its flexible and mobile ranks.

Now, the syndicalists continue, it is there in the workers' unions that anarchists must be. The workers' union is the living bud of the future society; it is the former which will pave the way for the latter. The error is made in staying within one's own four walls, among the other initiates, chewing the same questions of doctrine over and over again, always moving within the same circle of ideas. We must not, under any pretext, separate ourselves form the people, for no matter how backward and limited the people may be, it is they, and not the ideologue, who are the indispensable driving force of every social revolution. Do we perhaps, like the social democrats, have any interests we wish to promote other than those of the great working mass? Party, sect or factional interests? Is it up to the people to come to us or is it we who must go to them, living their lives, earning their trust and stimulating them with both our words and our example into resistance, rebellion, revolution?

This is how the syndicalists talk. But I do not see how their objections have any value against our project to organize ourselves. On the contrary. I see clearly that if they had any value, it would also be against anarchism itself, as a doctrine that seeks to be distinct from syndicalism and refuses to allow itself to become absorbed into it.

Organized or not, anarchists (by which I mean those of our tendency, who do not arbitrarily separate anarchism from the proletariat) do not by any means expect that they are entitled to act in the role of 'supreme saviours", as the song goes. We willingly assign pride of place in the field of action to the workers' movement, convinced as we have been for so long that the emancipation of the workers will be at the hands of those concerned or it will not be.

In other words, in our opinion the syndicate must not just have a purely corporative, trade function as the Guesdist socialists intend it, and with them some anarchists who cling to now outdated formulae. The time for pure corporativism is ended: this is a fact that could in principle be contrary to previous concepts, but which must be accepted with all its consequences. Yes, the corporative spirit is tending more and

more towards becoming an anomaly, an anachronism, and is making room for the spirit of class. And this, mark my words, is not thanks to Griffuelhes, nor to Pouget — it is a result of action. In fact it is the needs of action that have obliged syndicalism to lift up its head and widen its conceptions. Nowadays the workers' union is on the road to becoming for proletarians what the State is for the bourgeoisie: the political institution par excellence; an essential instrument in the struggle against capital, a weapon of defence or attack according to the situation.

Our task as anarchists, the most advanced, the boldest and the most uninhibited sector of the militant proletariat, is to stay constantly by its side, to fight the same battle among its ranks, to defend it against itself, not necessarily the least dangerous enemy. In other words, we want to provide this enormous moving mass that is the modern proletariat, I will not say with a philosophy and an ideal, something that could seem presumptuous, but with a goal and the means of action.

Far be it from us therefore the inept idea of wanting to isolate ourselves from the proletariat; that would be, we know only too well, to reduce ourselves to the impotence of proud ideologies, of abstractions empty of any ideal. Organized or not organized, then, the anarchists will remain true to their role of educators, stimulators and guides of the working masses. And if we are today of a mind to associate into groups in neighbourhoods, towns, regions or countries, and to federate these groups, it is above all in order to give our union action greater strength and continuity.

What is most often missing in those of us who fight within the world of labour, is the feeling of being supported. Social democratic syndicalists have behind them the constant organized power of the party from which they sometimes receive their watchwords and at all times their inspiration. Anarchist syndicalists on the other hand are abandoned unto themselves and, outside the union, do not have any real links between them or to their other comrades; they do not feel any support behind them and they receive no help. So, we wish to create this link, to provide this constant support; and I am personally convinced that our union activities cannot but benefit both in energy and in intelligence. And the stronger we are — and we will only become strong by organizing ourselves — the stronger will be the flow of ideas that we can send through the workers' movement, which will thus become slowly impregnated with the anarchist spirit.

But will these groups of anarchist workers, which we would hope to see created in the near future, have no other role than to influence the great proletarian masses indirectly, by means of a militant elite, to drive them systematically into heroic resolutions, in a word to prepare the

popular revolt? Will our groups have to limit themselves to perfecting the education of militants, to keep the revolutionary fever alive in them, to allow them to meet each other, to exchange ideas, to help each other at any time?

In other words, will they have their own action to carry out directly?

I believe so.

The social revolution, whether one imagines it in the guise of a general strike or an armed insurrection, can only be the work of the masses who must benefit from it. But every mass movement is accompanied by acts whose very nature — dare I say, whose technical nature — implies that they be carried out by a small number of people, the most perspicacious and daring sector of the mass movement. During the revolutionary period, in each neighbourhood, in each town, in each province, our anarchist groups will form many small fighting organizations, who will take those special, delicate measures which the large mass is almost always unable to do. It is clear that the groups should even now study and establish these insurrectional measures so as not to be, as has often happened, surprised by events.

Now for the principal, regular, continuous aim of our groups. It is (you will by now have guessed) anarchist propaganda. Yes, we will organize ourselves above all to spread our theoretical ideas, our methods of direct action and universal federalism.

Until today our propaganda has been made only or almost only on an individual basis. Individual propaganda has given notable results, above all in the heroic times when anarchists were compensating for the large number they needed with a fever of proselytism that recalled the primitive Christians. But is this continuing to happen? Experience obliges me to confess that it is not.

It seems that anarchism has been going through a sort of crisis in recent years, at least in France. The causes of this are clearly many and complex. It is not my task here to establish what they are, but I do wonder if the total lack of agreement and organization is not one of the causes of this crisis.

There are many anarchists in France. They are much divided on the question of theory, but even more so on practice. Everyone acts in his own way whenever he wants; in this way the individual efforts are dispersed and often exhausted, simply wasted. Anarchists can be found in more or less every sphere of action: in the workers' unions, in the anti-militarist movement, among anti-clericalist free thinkers, in the popular universities, and so on, and so forth. What we are missing is a specifically anarchist movement, which can gather to it, on the eco-

nomic and workers' ground that is ours, all those forces that have been fighting in isolation up till now.

This specifically anarchist movement will spontaneously arise from our groups and from the federation of these groups. The might of joint action, of concerted action, will undoubtedly create it. I do not need to add that this organization will by no means expect to encompass all the picturesquely dispersed elements who describe themselves as followers of the anarchist ideal; there are, after all, those who would be totally inadmissible. It would be sufficient for the anarchist organization to group together, around a programme of concrete, practical action, all the comrades who accept our principles and who want to work with us, according to our methods.

Let me make it clear that I do not wish to go into specifics here. I am not dealing with the theoretical side of the organization. The name, form and programme of the organization to be created will be established separately and after reflection by the supporters of this organization.

Errico Malatesta: Anarchism, Individualism and Organization

I have listened attentively to everything that has been said before me on the problem of organization and I have the distinct impression that what separates us is the different meaning we give words. Let us not squabble over words. But as far as the basic problem is concerned, I am convinced that we are in total agreement.

All anarchists, whatever tendency they belong to, are individualists in some way or other. But the opposite is not true; not by any means. The individualists are thus divided into two distinct categories: one which claims the right to full development for all human individuality, their own and that of others; the other which only thinks about its own individuality and has absolutely no hesitation in sacrificing the individuality of others. The Tsar of all the Russias belongs to the latter category of individualists. We belong to the former.

Ibsen writes that the most powerful man in the world is the one who is most alone! Absolutely absurd! Doctor Stockmann himself, whom Ibsen has pronounce this maxim, was not even isolated in the full sense of the word; he lived in a constituted society, not on Robinson Crusoe's island. Man "alone" cannot carry out even the smallest useful, productive task; and if someone needs a master above him it is exactly the man who lives

in isolation. That which frees the individual, that which allows him to develop all his faculties, is not solitude, but association.

In order to be able to carry out work that is really useful, co-operation is indispensable, today more than ever. Without doubt, the association must allow its individual members full autonomy and the federation must respect this same autonomy for its groups. We are careful not to believe that the lack of organization is a guarantee of freedom. Everything goes to show that it is not.

An example: there are certain French newspapers whose pages are closed to all those whose ideas, style or simply person have the misfortune to be unwelcome in the eyes of the editors. The result is: the editors are invested with a personal power which limits the freedom of opinion and expression of comrades. The situation would be different if these newspapers belonged to all, instead of being the personal property of this or that individual: then all opinions could be freely debated.

There is much talk of authority, of authoritarianism. But we should be clear what we are speaking of here. We protest with all our heart against the authority embodied in the State, whose only purpose is to maintain the economic slavery within society, and we will never cease to rebel against it. But there does exist a simply moral authority that arises out of experience, intelligence and talent, and despite being anarchists there is no one among us who does not respect this authority.

It is wrong to present the "organizers", the federalists, as authoritarians; but it is equally quite wrong to imagine the "anti-organizers", the individualists, as having deliberately condemned themselves to isolation.

For me, I repeat, the dispute between individualists and organizers is a simple dispute over words, which does not hold up to careful examination of the facts. In the practical reality, what do we see? That the individualists are at times "organizers" for the reason that the latter too often limit themselves to preaching organization without practicing it. On the other hand, one can come across much more effective authoritarianism in those groups who noisily proclaim the "absolute freedom of the individual", than in those that are commonly considered authoritarian because they have a bureau and take decisions.

In other words, everyone organizes themselves — organizers and anti-organizers. Only those who do little or nothing can live in isolation, contemplating. This is the truth; why not recognize it.

If proof be needed of what I say: in Italy all the comrades who are currently active in the struggle refer to my name, both the "individualists" and the "organizers", and I believe that they are all right, as whatever

their reciprocal differences may be, they all practice collective action nonetheless.

Enough of these verbal disputes; let us stick to action! Words divide and actions unite. It is time for all of us to work together in order to exert an effective influence on social events. It pains me to think that in order to free one of our own people from the clutches of the hangman it was necessary for us to turn to other parties instead of our own. Ferrer would not then owe his freedom to masons and bourgeois free thinkers if the anarchists, gathered together in a powerful and feared International, had been able to conduct themselves the worldwide protest against the criminal infamy of the Spanish government.

Let us ensure that the Anarchist International finally becomes a reality. To enable us to appeal quickly to all our comrades, to struggle against the reaction and to act, when the time is right, with revolutionary initiative, there must be an International!

Emma Goldman

I, too, am in favour of organization in principle. However, I fear that sooner or later this will fall into exclusivism.

Dunois has spoken against the excesses of individualism. But these excesses have nothing to do with true individualism, as the excesses of communism have nothing to do with real communism... I, too, will accept anarchist organization on just one condition: that it be based on the absolute respect for all individual initiatives and not obstruct their development or evolution.

The essential principle of anarchy is individual autonomy. The International will not be anarchist unless it wholly respects this principle.

Max Baginski

An error that is too often made is believing that individualism rejects organization. The two terms are, on the contrary, inseparable. Individualism more specifically means working for inner mental liberation of the individual, while organization means association between conscious individuals with a goal to reach or an economic need to satisfy. We must not however forget that a revolutionary organization requires particularly energetic and conscious individuals.

The accusation that anarchy is destructive rather than constructive and that accordingly anarchy is opposed to organization is one of the many falsehoods spread by our adversaries. They confuse today's institutions with organization and thus cannot understand how one can fight the former and favour the latter. The truth is, though, that the two are not identical.

The State is generally considered to be the highest form of organization. But is it really a true organization? Is it not rather an arbitrary institution cunningly imposed on the masses?

Industry, too, is considered an organization; yet nothing is further from the truth. Industry is piracy of the poor at the hands of the rich.

We are asked to believe that the army is an organization, but careful analysis will show that it is nothing less than a cruel instrument of blind force.

Public education: are not the universities and other scholastic institutions perhaps models of organization, which offer people fine opportunities to educate themselves? Far from it: schools, more than any other institution, are nothing more than barracks, where the human mind is trained and manipulated in order to be subjected to the various social and mental phantoms, and thus rendered capable of continuing this system of exploitation and oppression of ours.

Instead, organization as we understand it is something different. It is based on freedom. It is a natural, spontaneous grouping of energies to guarantee beneficial results to humanity.

It is the harmony of organic development that produces the variety of colours and forms, the combination that we so admire in a flower. In the same way, the organized activity of free human beings imbued with the spirit of solidarity will result in the perfection of social harmony, which we call anarchy. Indeed, only anarchy makes the non-authoritarian organization of common interests possible, since it abolishes the antagonism that exists between individuals and classes.

In the current situation, the antagonism of economic and social interests produces an unceasing war between social units and represents an insurmountable obstacle on the road to collective well-being.

There exists an erroneous conviction that organization does not encourage individual freedom and that, on the contrary, it causes a decay of individual personality. The reality is, however, that the true function of organization lies in personal development and growth.

Just as the cells of an animal, through reciprocal co-operation, express latent powers in the formation of the complete organism, so the individual reaches the highest level of his development through co-operation with other individuals.

An organization, in the true sense of the word, cannot be the product of a union of pure nothingness. It must be made up of self-conscious and intelligent persons. In fact, the sum of the possibilities and activities of an organization is represented by the expression of the single energies.

It follows logically that the greater the number of strong, self-conscious individuals in an organization, the lesser the danger of stagnation and the more intense its vital element.

Anarchism supports the possibility of organization without discipline, fear or punishment, without the pressure of poverty: a new social organism that will end the terrible struggle for the means of subsistence, the vicious struggle that damages man's best qualities and continually widens the social abyss. In short, anarchism struggles for a form of social organization that will ensure well-being for all.

The embryo of this organization can be found in the type of syndicalism that has freed itself from centralization, bureaucracy and discipline, that encourages autonomous, direct action by its members.

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Mutual Aid: An Essay

Errico Malatesta

1909

Since it is a fact that man is a social animal whose existence depends on the continued physical and spiritual relations between human beings, these relations must be based either on affinity, solidarity and love, or on hostility and struggle. If each individual thinks only of his well being, or perhaps that of his small consanguinary or territorial group, he will obviously find himself in conflict with others, and will emerge as victor or vanquished; as the oppressor if he wins, as the oppressed if he loses. Natural harmony, the natural marriage of the good of each with that of all, is the invention of human laziness, which rather than struggle to achieve what it wants assumes that it will be achieved spontaneously, by natural law. In reality, however, natural Man is in a state of continuous conflict with his fellows in his quest for the best, and healthiest site, the most fertile land, and in time, to exploit the many and varied opportunities that social life creates for some or for others. For this reason human history is full of violence, wars, carnage (besides the ruthless exploitation of the labour of others) and innumerable tyrannies and slavery.

If in the human spirit there had only existed this harsh instinct of wanting to predominate and to profit at the expense of others, humanity would have remained in its barbarous state and the development of order as recorded in history, or in our own times, would not have been possible. This order even at its worst, always represents a kind of tempering of the tyrannical spirit with a minimum of social solidarity, indispensable for a more civilised and progressive life.

But fortunately there exists in Man another feeling which draws him closer to his neighbour, the feeling of sympathy, tolerance, of love, and, thanks to it, mankind became more civilised, and from it grew our idea

which aims at making society a true gathering of brothers and friends all working for the common good.

How the feeling arose which is expressed by the so-called moral precepts and which, as it develops, denies the existing morality and substitutes a higher morality, is a subject for research which may interest philosophers and sociologists, but it does not detract from the fact that it exists, independently of the explanations which may be advanced. It is of no importance that it may stem from the primitive, physiological fact of the sex act to perpetuate the human species; or the satisfaction to be derived from the company of one's fellow beings; or the advantages to be derived from union in the struggle against the common enemy and in revolt against the common tyrant; or from the desire for leisure, peace and security that even the victors feel a need for; or perhaps for these and a hundred other reasons combined. It exists and it is on its development and growth that we base our hopes for the future of humanity.

"The will of God", "natural laws", "moral laws", the "categoric imperative" of the Kantians, even the "interest clearly understood" of the Utilitarians are all metaphysical fantasies which get one nowhere. They represent the commendable desire of the human mind to want to explain everything, to want to get to the bottom of things, and could be accepted as provisional hypotheses for further research, were they not, in most cases, the human tendency of never wanting to admit ignorance and preferring wordy explanations devoid of factual content to simply saying "I don't know."

Whatever the explanations anyone may or may not choose to give, the problem remains intact: one must choose between love and hate, between brotherly co-operation and fratricidal struggle, between "altruism" and "egoism."

The needs, tastes, aspirations and interests of mankind are neither similar nor naturally harmonious; often they are diametrically opposed and antagonistic. On the other hand, the life of each individual is so conditioned by the life of others that it would be impossible, even assuming it were convenient to do so, to isolate oneself and live one's own life. Social solidarity is a fact from which no one can escape: it can be freely and consciously accepted and in consequence benefit all concerned, or it can be accepted willy-nilly, consciously or otherwise, in which case it manifests itself by the subjection of one to another, by the exploitation of some by others.

A whole host of practical problems arise in our day-to-day lives which can be solved in different ways, but not by all ways at the same time; yet each individual may prefer one solution to another. If an individual or group have the power to impose their preference on others, they will

choose the solution which best suits the interests and tastes, the others will have to submit and sacrifice their wishes. But if no one has the possibility of obliging others to act against their will then, always assuming that it is not possible or considered convenient to adopt more than one solution, one must arrive by mutual concessions at an agreement which best suits everyone and least offends individual interests, tastes and wishes.

History teaches us, daily observation of life around us teaches, that where violence has no place [in human relations] everything is settled in the best possible way, in the best interests of all concerned. But where violence intervenes, injustice, oppression and exploitation invariably triumph.

The fact is that human life is not possible without profiting by the labour of others, and that there are only two ways in which this can be done: either through a fraternal, equalitarian and libertarian association, in which solidarity, consciously and freely expressed unites all mankind; or the struggle of each against the other in which the victors overrule, oppress and exploit the rest ...

We want to bring about a society in which men will consider each other as brothers and by mutual support will achieve the greatest well-being and freedom as well as physical and intellectual development for all ...

The strongest man is the one who is the least isolated; the most independent is the one who has most contacts and friendships and thereby a wider field for choosing his close collaborators; the most developed man is he who best can, and knows how to, utilise Man's common inheritance as well as the achievements of his contemporaries.

In spite of the rivers of human blood; in spite of the indescribable sufferings and humiliations inflicted; in spite of exploitation and tyranny at the expense of the weakest (by reason of personal, or social, inferiority); in a word, in spite of the struggle and all its consequences, that which in human society represents its vital and progressive characteristics, is the feeling of sympathy, the sense of a common humanity which in normal times, places a limit on the struggle beyond which one cannot venture without rousing deep disgust and widespread disapproval. For what intervenes is morality.

The professional historian of the old school may prefer to present the fruits of his research as sensational events, large-scale conflicts between nations and classes, wars, revolutions, the ins and outs of diplomacy and conspiracies; but what is really much more significant are the innumerable daily contacts between individuals and between groups which are the true substance of social life. And if one closely examines what happens deep down, in the intimate daily lives of the mass of hu-

manity, one finds that as well as the struggle to snatch better working conditions, the thirst for domination, rivalry, envy and all the unhealthy passions which set man against man, is also valuable work, mutual aid, unceasing and voluntary exchange of services, affection, love, friendship and all that which draws people closer together in brotherhood. And human collectivizes advance or decay, live or die, depending on whether solidarity and love, or hatred and struggle, predominate in the community's affairs; indeed, the very existence of any community would not be possible if the social feelings, which I would call the good passions, were not stronger than the bad.

The existence of sentiments of affection and sympathy among mankind, and the experience and awareness of the individual and social advantages which stem from the development of these sentiments, have produced and go on producing concepts of "justice" and "right" and "morality" which, in spite of a thousand contradictions, lies and hypocrisy serving base interests, constitute a goal, an ideal towards which humanity advances.

This "morality" is fickle and relative; it varies with the times, with different peoples, classes and individuals; people use it to serve their own personal interests and that of their families, class or country. But discarding what, in official "morality", serves to defend the privilege and violence of the ruling class, there is always something left which is in the general interest and is the common achievement of all mankind, irrespective of class and race.

The bourgeoisie in its heroic period, when it still felt itself a part of the people and fought for emancipation, had sublime gestures of love and self-abnegation; and the best among its thinkers and martyrs had the almost prophetic vision of that future of peace, brotherhood and well-being which socialists are struggling for today [1909]. But if altruism and solidarity were among the feelings of the best of them, the germ of individualism (in the sense of struggle between individuals), the principle of struggle (as opposed to solidarity) and the exploitation of man by man, were in the programme of the bourgeoisie and could not but give rise to baneful consequences. Individual property and the principle of authority, in the new disguises of capitalism and parliamentarism, were in that programme and had to lead, as has always been the case, to oppression, misery and the dehumanization of the masses.

And now that the development of capitalism and parliamentarism has borne its fruits, and the bourgeoisie has exhausted every generous sentiment and progressive elan by the practice of political and economic competition, it is reduced to having to defend its privileges with force and deceit, while its philosophers cannot defend it against the socialist

attacks except by bringing up, inopportunely, the law of vital competition.

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from Malatesta: Life and Ideas, (Verne Richards' ed.),London, Freedom Press, 1965

Majorities and Minorities

Errico Malatesta

We do not recognize the right of the majority to impose the law on the minority, even if the will of the majority in somewhat complicated issues could really be ascertained. The fact of having the majority on one's side does not in any way prove that one must be right. Indeed, humanity has always advanced through the initiative and efforts of individuals and minorities, whereas the majority, by its very nature, is slow, conservative, submissive to superior force and to established privileges.

But if we do not for one moment recognize the right of majorities to dominate minorities, we are even more opposed to domination of the majority by a minority. It would be absurd to maintain that one is right because one is in a minority. If at all times there have been advanced and enlightened minorities, so too have there been minorities which were backward and reactionary; if there are human beings who are exceptional, and ahead of their times, there are also psychopaths, and especially are there apathetic individuals who allow themselves to be unconsciously carried on the tide of events.

In any case it is not a question of being right or wrong; it is a question of freedom, freedom for all, freedom for each individual so long as he does not violate the equal freedom of others. No one can judge with certainty who is right and who is wrong, who is closer to the truth and which is the best road to the greatest good for each and everyone. Experience through freedom is the only means to arrive at the truth and the best solutions; and there is no freedom if there is not the freedom to be wrong.

In our opinion, therefore, it is necessary that majority and minority should succeed in living together peacefully and profitably by mutual agreement and compromise, by the intelligent recognition of the practical necessities of communal life and of the usefulness of concessions which circumstances make necessary.

As well as their reason and experience telling them that in spite of using all the alchemy of elections and parliament one always ends up by having laws which represent everything but the will of the majority, anarchists do not recognize that the majority as such, even if it were possible to establish beyond all doubt what it wanted, has the right to impose itself on the dissident minorities by the use of force.

Apart from these considerations, there always exists the fact that in a capitalist regime, in which society is divided into rich and poor, into employers and employees whose next meal depends on the absolute power of the boss, there cannot be really free elections.

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The Tragic Bandits

Errico Malatesta

1913

It would seem that it's late in the day to still talk about it, but the subject nevertheless remains current, since we're dealing with acts and discussions that have occurred over and again in the past and that, alas, will repeat themselves in the future as well. For as long as the determining causes have not disappeared.

A few individuals stole, and in order to steal, killed; they killed at random, without discernment anyone who stood between them and the money they were after. Killed men unknown to them, workers, victims like themselves and even more than themselves of a bad social organization.

At heart there was nothing in this but the ordinary: they were the bitter fruit that ripen on the tree of privilege in the normal course of events. When all of social life is stained with fraud and violence, and when he who is born poor is condemned to all kinds of sufferings and humiliations; when money is something indispensable for the satisfaction of our needs and respect for our personality, and when for so many people it is impossible to obtain through honest and dignified labor, there is no reason to be surprised if from time to time a few unfortunates burst forth who, tired of the yoke and taking inspiration from bourgeois morality, but not able to appropriate the labor of others under the protection of the gendarmes, illegally steal under the nose of the latter. Since in order to steal they can't organize military expeditions or sell poison in the guise of food, they murder directly with revolvers or daggers.

But the "bandits" called themselves anarchists and that gave an importance and a symbolic meaning to exploits that were far from having them on their own.

The bourgeoisie takes advantage of the impression produced on the public by such acts in order to denigrate anarchism and to consolidate its own power. The police, who are often the secret instigators of these exploits, use them to magnify their own importance and to satisfy their persecutory and murderous instincts in order to recover the cost of spilled blood in solid coin and promotions. What is more, since anarchism was being spoken of a number of our comrades felt themselves obliged not to deny what called itself anarchist. Many, fascinated by the colorfulness of the adventure, admiring the courage of the protagonists, saw in this nothing but an act of rebellion against the law, forgetting to examine the why and the how.

But it seems to me that in order to determine our conduct, and to counsel that of others, it is important to examine things calmly, to judge them in accordance with our aspirations and to not grant aesthetic impressions more value than they have in reality.

To be sure these men were courageous, and courage (which is perhaps nothing else than good physical health) is without any fear of contradiction a marvelous quality. But it can be used in the service of evil as well as good. We have seen courageous men among martyrs for liberty as well as among the most odious tyrants. It can be found in revolutionaries as it can be found among *camorrists*, soldiers and policemen. Normally we correctly qualify as heroes those who risk their lives for the good and we treat as violent individuals or, in the most serious cases, as unfeeling and blood-thirsty brutes, those who use their courage to do ill.

I will not deny the colorfulness of these episodes and even, in a certain sense, their aesthetic beauty. But the admiring poets of the "*beau geste*" should take the trouble to reflect a little.

An automobile going at full speed, driven by men armed with Brownings who spread terror and death in their path is more modern but no more colorful than a brigand in a feathered hat armed with a blunderbuss who assaults and robs a caravan of travelers, or the feudal baron, dressed in steel and seated on an iron-clad charger demanding his due from a commoner, and it's not worth any more. If the Italian government had had something other than operetta generals and ignorant and thieving chiefs it would perhaps have succeeded in pulling off a beautiful military operation on Libya, but would the war have been any less criminal or morally hideous for all that?

Nevertheless these bandits weren't, or at least were not all, vulgar criminals.

Among these "thieves" there were disoriented idealists; among these "assassins" there were heroic natures that in other circumstances, or inspired by other ideas, could have affirmed themselves as such. What

is certain for whoever knew them is that these individuals were preoccupied with ideas and that, if they reacted with ferocity against their environment and sought with a beautiful frenzy to satisfy their passions and their needs, it was largely under the influence of a special concept of life and struggle.

But are these anarchist ideas?

Can these ideas, even if we grant words their widest meaning, be confused with anarchism or are they, on the contrary, in flagrant contradiction with it?

That is the question.

* * *

An anarchist is, by definition, one who doesn't want to be oppressed or oppressor, who wants the maximum amount of wellbeing, the greatest amount of freedom, the most complete blossoming of all humans.

His ideas, his wishes all draw their origins form the feeling of sympathy, from respect for all beings, a feeling that must be strong enough to bring him to want the happiness of others as much as his own, and to renounce personal advantages the obtaining of which demand the sacrifice of others. If this weren't the case why would he be the enemy of oppression and why wouldn't he seek to be an oppressor?

The anarchist knows that the individual cannot live outside of society. That on the contrary, as a human being he only exists because he bears, summed up in him, the results of the labors of countless past generations, and because he benefits throughout his life from the collaboration of his contemporaries.

He also knows that the activity of each directly or indirectly influences the life of all, and thus recognizes the great law of solidarity that reigns in society as well as in nature. And since he wants liberty for all he must wish that the activity of that necessary solidarity, instead of being unconsciously and involuntarily imposed and accepted, instead of being left to chance and exploited for the profit of some and to the detriment of others, become conscious and voluntary and manifest itself in equal advantages for all.

Either be the oppressed or the oppressor, or cooperate for the greater good of all: there are no other alternatives. And the anarchists are naturally — and could not be otherwise — for free and consensual cooperation.

So let's not "philosophize" and talk about egoism, altruism and other puzzles. We will gladly agree: we are egoists. All of us seek our own satisfaction, but he is an anarchist who will find his greatest satisfaction

in fighting for the good of all, for the coming of a society within which he will feel a brother among his brothers, amidst men who are healthy, intelligent, learned and happy. He who can live satisfied among slaves and who can draw a profit from the work of slaves is not, and cannot be, an anarchist.

There are strong, intelligent, passionate individuals, prey to great material or intellectual needs who, placed in the ranks of the oppressed, want at whatever the cost to free themselves and, in order to do this, have no hesitation about becoming oppressors. These individuals, finding themselves blocked by current society, come to hate and despise all societies and, realizing that it would be absurd to want to live outside the collectivity, want to make all men submit to their will, to the satisfying of their passions. Sometimes, when they are somewhat enamored of literature, they call themselves "Supermen." Unscrupulous, they want to "live their lives." Mocking the revolution and all hopes for the future, they want to enjoy the moment at whatever price and with contempt for all. They would sacrifice all of humanity for one hour — and some have literally said this — of "intense life."

They are rebels, but not anarchists. They have the mentality, the sentiments of bourgeois manqués, and if they manage to succeed they become actual bourgeois, and not the least terrible among them.

In the course of the struggle it sometimes occurs that we find them at our side, but we can't, we shouldn't, nor do we want to confuse ourselves with them. And they know this full well.

* * *

But many among them love to call themselves anarchists. Which is true, and deplorable.

Of course we can't prevent people from taking whatever name they like, and for our part we can't abandon the name that sums up our ideas and that belongs to us, logically and historically. What we can do is make sure there is no confusion about this, or at least the least amount of confusion possible.

Nevertheless, we must try to find out how it is that individuals with aspirations so contrary to ours have been able to appropriate a name that is the negation of their ideas, of their sentiments.

I alluded above to the fishy maneuvers of the police, and it would be easy for me to prove how certain aberrations for which they have attempted to blame the anarchists had as their place of origin the police's dens of iniquity: Andrieux, Goron and their ilk.

At the moment when anarchism began to manifest itself and obtain importance in France the police had the brilliant idea, worthy of the

cagiest of Jesuits, to fight the movement from within. With this end in mind they sent agents provocateurs among the anarchists who put on ultra-revolutionary airs and ably travestied anarchist ideas, made them grotesque and something diametrically opposed to what they are in reality. They founded papers paid for by the police, provoked insane and criminal acts so as to put them on display and qualified as anarchist, compromised naïve and sincere young people who they soon after turned in and, with the complicity of the bourgeois press, they succeeded in persuading a part of the public that anarchism was what they represented. And the French comrades have good reason to believe that the same police maneuvers are still being carried out and aren't foreign to the events with which we are dealing in this article. Sometimes the events exceed the intentions of the provocateurs, but whatever the case, the police profit from them all the same.

We must add to these police influences others that are less disgusting but no less harmful. At a time when striking attentats attracted the attention of the public to anarchist ideas writers of talent, professionals of the pen always on the lookout for a fashionable subject and the sensational paradox, set themselves to doing anarchism. And since they were bourgeois in mentality and education, with bourgeois ambitions, they made anarchism something fit to give imaginative young girls and blasé old ladies a sensual shiver, but which had nothing to do with the emancipating movement of the masses that anarchism can provoke... They were men of talent, who wrote well, often advancing things that no one understood and...they were admired. At a certain moment wasn't it said in Italy that Gabriele D'Annunzio had become a socialist?

After a while these "intellectuals" returned to the bourgeois bosom to taste there the price of the notoriety acquired, showing themselves to be what they had never ceased being: publicity-seeking literary adventurers. But the harm had been done.

* * *

In summary, none of this would have caused great harm if there only existed people with clear ideas, clearly knowing what they want and acting in consequence. But along with them how many are there with confused ideas, their souls uncertain, ceaselessly going from one extreme to the other.

This is how it is with those who call and believe themselves to be anarchists but who glory in the evil acts they commit (and which are often excusable because of necessity or their environment) by saying that the bourgeoisie act the same, and even worse. This is true, but why then think yourself other and better than them?

They condemn the bourgeois because he robs the worker of a good part of his labor, but have nothing to say if one of their own robs from that worker the little the bourgeois left him.

They are indignant when the boss, in order to increase his profits, makes a man work in unhealthy conditions, but are full of indulgence for he will stab that man in order to rob a few *sous*.

They have nothing but contempt for the usurer who extorts a few francs in interest from a poor devil for the ten francs he loaned him, but find it estimable that one of them takes ten francs from him out of ten (that he didn't loan him) by passing off a false coin.

Since they are poor in spirit they believe themselves to be naturally superior beings and affect a profound contempt for the "stupefied masses," arrogating to themselves the right to do harm to workers, the poor, and the unfortunate because they "don't rebel and are thus the supporters of current society." I know a capitalist who, when sitting in a café, takes pleasure in calling himself socialist, or even anarchist, but who in his factory is no less of an exploiter: a avaricious, hard, prideful boss. And he doesn't deny it at all, but has the habit of justifying his conduct in a way that is quite original for a boss:

"My workers," he argues, "deserve the treatment I make them suffer, since they submit to it. They have the personalities of slaves, and they are the supporters of the bourgeois regime, etc. etc."

This is exactly the language of those who call themselves anarchists but who feel neither sympathy for nor solidarity with the oppressed. The conclusion would be that their true friends are the bosses and their enemies the mass of the disinherited.

Well then, what are they doing blathering on about emancipation and anarchism? Let them go with the bourgeoisie and leave us in peace.

* * *

I've said enough and I have to conclude.

I will conclude by giving some advice to those who want to "live their lives" and don't care about the lives of others.

Theft and murder are dangerous means and, in general, not very profitable. On that path you only succeed in passing your life in prison or leaving your head on the guillotine — especially if you have the impudence to attract the attention of the police by calling yourself an anarchist and frequenting anarchists.

It's hardly a profitable affair.

When you are intelligent, energetic and unscrupulous it is easy to make your way among the bourgeoisie.

Let them strive then through legal theft and murder to become bourgeois. They'll do much better, and if it is true that they have intellectual sympathies for anarchism they will spare themselves the displeasure of harming the cause that is dear to them — intellectually.

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Anarchists Have Forgotten Their Principles

Errico Malatesta

November 1914

At the risk of passing as a simpleton, I confess that I would never have believed it possible that Socialists—even Social Democrats—would applaud and voluntarily take part, either on the side of the Germans or on the Allies, in a war like the one that is at present devastating Europe. But what is there to say when the same is done by Anarchists—not numerous, it is true, but having amongst them comrades whom we love and respect most?

It is said that the present situation shows the bankruptcy of "our formulas"—*i.e.*, of our principles—and that it will be necessary to revise them.

Generally speaking, every formula must be revised whenever it shows itself insufficient when coming into contact with fact; but it is not the case to-day, when the bankruptcy is not derived from the shortcoming of our formulas, but from the fact that these have been forgotten and betrayed.

Let us return to our principles.

I am not a "pacifist". I fight, as we all do, for the triumph of peace and of fraternity amongst all human beings; but I know that a desire not to fight can only be fulfilled when neither side wants to, and that so long as men will be found who want to violate the liberties of others, it is incumbent on these others to defend themselves if they do not wish to be eternally beaten; and I also know that to attack is often the best, or the only, effective means of defending oneself. Besides, I think that the oppressed are always in a state of legitimate self-defense, and have always the right to attack the oppressors. I admit, therefore, that there

are wars that are necessary, holy wars: and these are wars of liberation, such as are generally "civil wars"—*i.e.*, revolutions.

But what has the present war in common with human emancipation, which is our cause?

To-day we hear Socialists peak, just like any bourgeois, of "France," or "Germany," and of other political and national agglomerations—results of historical struggles—as of homogenous ethnographic units, each having its proper interests, aspirations, and mission, in opposition to the interests, aspirations and a mission of rival units. This may be true relatively, so long as the oppressed, and chiefly the workers, have no self-consciousness, fail to recognize the injustice of their oppressors. There is, then, the dominating class only that counts; and this class, owing to its desire to conserve and to enlarge its power, even its prejudices and its own ideas, may find it convenient to excite racial ambitions and hatred, and send its nation, its flock, against "foreign" countries, with a view to releasing them from their present oppressors, and submitting them to its own political economical domination.

But the mission of those who, like us, wish the end of all oppression and of all exploitation of man by man, is to awaken a consciousness of the antagonism of interests between dominators and dominated, between exploiters and workers, and to develop the class struggle inside each country, and the solidarity among all workers across the frontiers, as against any prejudice and any passion of either race or nationality.

And this we have always done. We have always preached that the workers of all countries are brothers, and that the enemy—the "foreigner"—is the exploiter, whether born near us or in a far-off country, whether speaking the same language or any other. We have always chosen our friends, our companions-in-arms, as well as our enemies, because of the ideas they profess and of the position they occupy in the social struggle, and never for reasons of race or nationality. We have always fought against patriotism, which is a survival of the past, and serves well the interest of the oppressors; and we were proud of being internationalists, not only in words, but by the deep feelings of our souls.

And now that the most atrocious consequences of capitalist and State domination should indicate, even to the blind, that we were in the right, most of the Socialists and many Anarchists in the belligerent countries associate themselves with the Governments and the bourgeoisie of their respective countries, forgetting Socialism, the class struggle, international fraternity, and the rest.

What a downfall!

It is possible that the present events may have shown that national feelings are more alive, while feelings of international brotherhood are

less rooted, than we thought; but this should be one more reason for intensifying, not abandoning, our antipatriotic propaganda. These events also show that in France, for example, religious sentiment is stronger, and the priests have a greater influence than we imagined. Is this a reason for our conversion to Roman Catholicism?

I understand that circumstances may arise owing to which the help of all is necessary for the general well-being: such as an epidemic, an earthquake, an invasion of barbarians, who kill and destroy all that comes under their hands. In such a case the class struggle, the differences of social standing must be forgotten, and common cause must be made against the common danger; but on the condition that these differences are forgotten on both sides. If any one is in prison during an earthquake, and there is a danger of his being crushes to death, it is our duty to save everybody, even the gaolers—on condition that the gaolers begin by opening the prison doors. But is the gaolers take all precautions for the safe custody of the prisoners during and after the catastrophe, it is then the duty of the prisoners towards themselves as well as towards their comrades in captivity to leave the gaolers to their troubles, and profit by the occasion to save themselves.

If, when foreign soldiers invade the *sacred soil of the Fatherland*, the privileged class were to renounce their privileges, and would act so that the "Fatherland" really became the common property of all the inhabitants, it would then be right that all should fight against the invaders. But if kings wish to remain kings, and the landlords with to take care of *their* lands and of *their* houses, and the merchants wish to take care of *their* goods, and even sell them at a higher price, then the workers, the Socialists and Anarchists, should leave them to their own devices, while being themselves on the look-out for an opportunity to get rid of the oppressors inside the country, as well as of those coming from outside.

In all circumstances, it is the duty of the Socialists, and especially of the Anarchists, to do everything that can weaken the State and the capitalist class, and to take as the only guide to their conduct the interest of Socialism; or, if they are materially powerless to act efficaciously for their own cause, at least to refuse any voluntary help to the cause of the enemy, and stand aside to save at least their principles—which means to save the future.

All I have just said is theory, and perhaps it is accepted, in theory, by most of those who, in practice, do just the reverse. How, then, could it be applied to the present situation? What should we do, what should we wish, in the interests of our cause?

It is said, on this side of the Rhine, that the victory of the Allies would be the end of militarism, the triumph of civilization, international jus-

tice, etc. The same is said on the other side of the frontier about a German victory.

Personally, judging at their true value the "mad dog" of Berlin and the "old hangman" of Vienna, I have no greater confidence in the bloody Tsar, nor in the English diplomatists who oppress India, who betrayed Persia, who crushed the Boer Republics; nor in the French bourgeoisie, who massacred the natives of Morocco; nor in those of Belgium, who have allowed the Congo atrocities and have largely profited by them—and I only recall some of their misdeeds, taken at random, not to mention what all Governments and all capitalist classes do against the workers and the rebels in their own countries.

In my opinion, the victory of Germany would certainly mean the triumph of militarism and of reaction; but the triumph of the Allies would mean a Russo-English (*i.e.*, a knouto-capitalist) domination in Europe and in Asia, conscription and the development of the militarist spirit in England, and a Clerical and perhaps Monarchist reaction in France.

Besides, in my opinion, it is most probable that there will be no definite victory on either side. After a long war, an enormous loss of life and wealth, both sides being exhausted, some kind of peace will be patched up, leaving all questions open, thus preparing for a new war more murderous than the present.

The only hope is revolution; and as I think that it is from vanquished Germany that in all probability, owing to the present state of things, the revolution would break out, it is for this reason—and for this reason only—that I wish the defeat of Germany.

I may, of course, be mistaken in appreciating the true position. But what seems to be elementary and fundamental for all Socialists (Anarchists, or others) is that it is necessary to keep outside every kind of compromise with the Governments and the governing classes, so as to be able to profit by any opportunity that may present itself, and, in any case, to be able to restart and continue our revolutionary preparations and propaganda.

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/malatesta/ForgottenPrinciples.html

Anti-War Manifesto of the Anarchist International

Various Authors

February 15, 1915

A Note

The manifesto below was issued on February 15, 1915. It was signed by thirty-five well-known libertarians of various nationalities—among them Errico Malatesta, Alexander Schapiro, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Domela Nieuwenhuis, etc. Malatesta and Schapiro were two of the five secretaries of the International Bureau, elected at the international anarchist congress in 1907. Another of the secretaries, Rudolf Rocker,[2] had not been able to append his signature, in that he was an internee at the time—but he too was against the war.

The Manifesto

Europe in flames, tens of millions of men at loggerheads in the most frightful butchery in recorded history, hundreds of millions of women and children in tears, the economic, intellectual and moral life of seven great peoples brutally suspended, with the daily more grave threat of further military complications—such, five months on, is the dismal, harrowing, odious spectacle offered by the civilized world.

But this spectacle was anticipated, by anarchists at any rate.

For there never has been and is no doubt—and today's horrific events reinforce this confidence—that war is permanently incubating within the existing body of society and that armed conflict, be it specific or general, in the colonies or in Europe, is the natural consequence and necessary, inescapable destiny of a regime founded upon the economic inequality of its citizens, relying upon the unbridled clash of interests, and placing the world of labor under the narrow, painful oversight of a minority of parasites who hold both political power and economic might. War was inevitable; from whatever quarter, it simply had to come. Not for nothing has the last half-century been spent on feverish preparation of the most formidable armaments and every passing day seen the death budgets swell. Continual refinement of war materials, every mind and every will kept constantly geared towards ever-better organization of the military machine—scarcely the way to work for peace.

So it is naive and puerile, once the causes and the occasions of strife have been multiplied, to try to define the degree of blame attaching to such and such a government. No distinction is possible between offen-

[2] Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958), German anarchist historian and philosopher who died in the United States. Author, notably of *The Bankruptcy of Russian State Communism* (in German), 1921.

sive wars and defensive wars. In the current conflict, the governments in Berlin and Vienna have justified themselves by producing documents every bit as authentic as those produced by the governments in Paris, London and Petrograd. It is for whoever on each side who will produce the most unchallengeable, most telling documentation to prove their bona fides and portray themselves as the unblemished defender of the right and of freedom, the champion of civilization.

Civilization? Who stands for that at the moment? Is it the German State with its redoubtable militarism, so powerful that it has stifled every vestige of rebellion? Or the Russian State, whose only methods of persuasion are the knout, the gibbet and Siberia? Or the French State with its Hiribi, its bloody conquests in Tonkin, Madagascar, Morocco and forcible conscription of black troops; the France whose prisons have housed, for years past, comrades whose only crime was to have written and spoken out against war? Or England, as she exploits, divides, starves, and oppresses the peoples of her huge colonial empire?

No. None of the belligerents has any right to lay claim to civilization, just as none of them is entitled to claim legitimate self-defense.

The truth is that the root of wars, of the war currently bloodying the plains of Europe, just like all the ones that went before it, is located exclusively in the existence of the State, which is the political form of privilege.

The State is born of military might; it has grown through recourse to military might, and, logically, it is upon military might that it must rely if it is to retain its omnipotence. Whatever the form it may assume, the State is merely oppression organized for the benefit of a privileged minority. The present conflict offers a striking illustration of this: all forms of the state are embroiled in the present war—absolutism is represented by Russia, absolutism mitigated by parliamentarism, by Germany, a State ruling over very different peoples, by Austria, constitutional democracy by England and the democratic republican system by France.

The misfortune of the peoples, who were nevertheless all deeply committed to peace, is that they trusted in the State with its scheming diplomats, in democracy and in the political parties (even the opposition parties, like the parliamentary socialists) to avert war. That trust was deliberately abused and continues to be abused when those in government, with the help of their whole press, persuade their respective peoples that this war is a war of liberation.

We are determinedly against any war between peoples, and, in the neutral countries, like Italy, where those in government are seeking once again to push more peoples into the inferno of war, our comrades

have opposed, oppose and always will oppose war with every ounce of energy they possess.

No matter where they may find themselves, the anarchists' role in the current tragedy is to carry on proclaiming that there is but one war of liberation: the one waged in every country by the oppressed against the oppressor, by the exploited against the exploiter. Our task is to summon the slaves to revolt against their masters.

Anarchist propaganda and anarchist action should set about doggedly undermining and breaking up the various States, cultivating the spirit of rebellion and acting as midwife to the discontent in the peoples and in the armies.

To every soldier from every country convinced that he is fighting for justice and freedom, we must explain that their heroism and their valor will serve only to perpetuate hatred, tyranny and misery.

To the factory workers, we must be a reminder that the rifles they now hold in their hands have been used against them during strikes and legitimate revolts, and will again be deployed against them later to force them to submit to the employers' exploitation.

We have to show the peasants that after the war they will once again have to bend beneath the yoke and carry on working their masters' land and feeding the rich.

All of the outcasts must be shown that they should not lay down their weapons until such time as they have settled scores with their oppressors and taken the land and the factory for their own.

We will show mothers, sweethearts and daughters, the victims of overwhelming misery and deprivation, who bears the real responsibility for their grief and for the carnage of their fathers, sons and spouses.

We must capitalize upon every stirring of rebellion, every discontent in order to foment insurrection, to organize the revolution to which we look for the ending of all of society's iniquities.

No loss of heart, even in the face of a calamity such as war! It is in such troubled times, when thousands of men are heroically giving their lives for an idea, that we must show such men the generosity, grandeur and beauty of the anarchist ideal: social justice achieved through the free organization of producers: war and militarism eradicated forever, complete freedom won through the utter demolition of the State and its agencies of coercion.

Long live Anarchy!

Signed by –
Leonard D. Abbott, Alexander Berkman, L. Bertoni, L. Bersani, G. Bernard, G. Barrett, A. Bernardo, E. Boudot, A. Calzitta, Joseph J. Cohen, Henrry Combes, Nestor Ciele van Diepen, F.W. Dunn, Ch. Frigerio, Emma Goldman, V. Garcia, Hippolyte Havel, T.H. Keell, Harry Kelly, J. Lemaire, E. Malatesta, H. Marques, F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, Noel Panavich, E. Recchioni, G. Rijnders, I. Rochtchine, A. Savioli, A. Schapiro, William Shatoff, V.J.C. Schermerhorn, C. Trombetti, P. Vallina, G. Vignati, Lillian G. Woolf, S. Yanovsky.

A Contrary Note

On a contrary note, in the spring of 1916, some other anarchists, including Kropotkin, Tcherkessoff, Jean Grave, Charles Malato, Christian Cornelisse, Paul Reclus (son of Elisee[3]), etc., issued a declaration approving the war. In France, it was carried by La Bataille Syndicaliste*, a news-sheet suspected of being subsidized by the French government. This declaration became famous as the "Manifesto of the Sixteen," although, in fact, it had only fifteen signatories. In May 1916, it elicited a protest from anarchist-communists, which concluded with these words:*

Excerpt from the "Manifesto of the Sixteen"

We declare that all propaganda in favor of continuance of the war between the peoples "to the bitter end," which is to say, "until victory" by one of the belligerent coalitions, is essentially nationalistic and reactionary propaganda; that the aims in terms of which this propaganda attempts to justify and explain itself are quite ingenuous, profoundly mistaken and cannot withstand the slightest historical or logical scrutiny; that such propaganda, having nothing in common with anarchism, antimilitarism or internationalism, instead represents, in its very essence and in its practical consequences, a sort of propaganda on behalf of militarism and supposedly "democratic" nationalistic Statism; that it is the absolute duty of anarchist-communists to struggle firmly against such

[3] Charles Malato (1857–1938), anarchist writer, author, notably, of *The Philosophy of Anarchy* (1889): Paul Reclus, son of Elisee Reclus.

aberrations and against these currents of ideas which are utterly contrary to the workers' vital interests; and that, as a result, not only can we not, hereafter, regard the signatories to the "Declaration" as comrades in the struggle, but we find ourselves obliged to class them resolutely as enemies, unwitting enemies maybe, but real enemies of the working class for all that.

Chapter entitled "Malatesta, The Anarchist International, and War," pages 387–390 of *No Gods, No Masters* edited by Daniel Guérin.

Footnotes and notes by Daniel Guérin.

Pro-Government Anarchists

Errico Malatesta

April 1916

A manifesto has just appeared, signed by Kropotkin, Grave, Malato, and a dozen other old comrades, in which, echoing the supporters of the Entente Governments who are demanding a fight to a finish and the crushing of Germany, they take their stand against any idea of "premature peace".

The capitalist Press publishes, with natural satisfaction, extracts from the manifesto, and announces it as the work of "leaders of the International Anarchist Movement."

Anarchists, almost all of whom have remained faithful to their convictions, owe it to themselves to protest against this attempt to implicate Anarchism in the continuance of a ferocious slaughter that has never held promise of any benefit to the cause of Justice and Liberty, and which now shows itself to be absolutely barren and resultless even from the standpoint of the rulers on either side.

The good faith and good intentions of those who have signed the manifesto are beyond all question. But, however painful it may be to disagree with old friends who have rendered so many services to that which in the past was our common cause, one cannot—having regard to sincerity, and in the interest of our movement for emancipation—fail to dissociate oneself from comrades who consider themselves able to reconcile Anarchist ideas and co-operation with the Governments and capitalist classes of certain countries in their strife against the capitalists and Governments of certain other countries.

During the present war we have seen Republicans placing themselves at the service of kings, Socialists making common the cause with the ruling class, Labourists serving the interests of capitalists; but in reality all these people are, in varying degrees, Conservatives—believers in the

mission of the State, and their hesitation can be understood when the only remedy lay in the destruction of every Governmental chain and the unloosing of the Social Revolution. But such hesitation is incomprehensible in the case of Anarchists.

We hold that the State is incapable of good. In the field of international as well as of individual relations it can only combat aggression by making itself the aggressor; it can only hinder crime by organising and committing still greater crime.

Even on the supposition—which is far from being the truth—that Germany alone was responsible for the present war, it is proved that, as long as governmental methods are adhered to, Germany can only be resisted by suppressing all liberty and reviving the power of all the forces of reaction. Except the popular Revolution, there is no other way of resisting the menace of a disciplined Army but to try and have a stronger and more disciplined Army; so that the sternest anti-militarists, if they are not Anarchists, and if they are afraid of the destruction of the State, are inevitably led to become ardent militarists.

In fact, in the problematical hope of crushing Prussian Militarism, they have renounced all the spirit and all the traditions of Liberty; they have Prussianised England and France; they have submitted themselves to Tsarism; they have restored the prestige of the tottering throne of Italy.

Can Anarchists accept this state of things for a single moment without renouncing all right to call themselves Anarchists? To me, even foreign domination suffered by force and leading to revolt, is preferable to domestic oppression meekly, almost gratefully, accepted, in the belief that by this means we are preserved from a greater evil.

It is useless to say that this is a question of an exceptional time, and that after having contributed to the victory of the Entente in "this war," we shall return, each into his own camp, to the struggle for his own ideal.

If it is necessary to-day to work in harmony with the Government and the capitalist to defend ourselves against "the German menace," it will be necessary afterwards, as well as during the war.

However great may be the defeat of the German Army—if it is true that it will be defeated—it will never be possible to prevent the German patriots thinking of, and preparing for, revenge; and the patriots of the other countries, very reasonably from their own point of view, will want to hold themselves in readiness so that they may not again be taken unaware. This means that Prussian Militarism will become a permanent and regular institution in all countries.

What will then be said by the self-styled Anarchists who to-day desire the victory of one of the warring alliances? Will they go on calling themselves anti-militarists and preaching disarmament, refusal to do military service, and sabotage against National Defense, only to become, at the first threat of war, recruiting-sergeants for those Governments that they have attempted to disarm and paralyse?

It will be said that these things will come to an end when the German people have rid themselves of their tyrants and ceased to be a menace to Europe by destroying militarism in their own country. But, if that is the case, the Germans who think, and rightfully so, that English and French domination (to say nothing of Tsarist Russia) would be so more delightful to the Germans than German domination to the French and English, will desire first to wait for the Russians and the others to destroy their own militarism, and will meanwhile continue to increase their own country's Army.

And then, how long will the Revolution be delayed? How long Anarchy? Must we always wait for the others to begin?

The line of conduct for Anarchists is clearly marked out by the very logic of their aspirations.

The war ought to have been prevented by bringing about the Revolution, or at least by making the Government afraid of the Revolution. Either the strength or the skill necessary for this has been lacking.

Peace ought to be imposed by bringing about the Revolution, or at least by threatening to do so. To the present time, the strength or the skill is wanting.

Well! There is only one remedy: to do better in future. More than ever we must avoid compromise; deepen the chasm between capitalists and wage slaves, between rulers and ruled; preach expropriation of private property and the destruction of States as the only means of guaranteeing fraternity between the peoples and Justice and Liberty for all; and we must prepare to accomplish these things.

Meanwhile it seems to me that it is criminal to do anything that tends to prolong the war, that slaughters men, destroys wealth, and hinders all resumption of the struggle for emancipation. It appears to me that preaching "war to the end" is really playing the game of the German rulers, who are deceiving their subjects and inflaming their ardor for fighting by persuading them that their opponents desire to crush and enslave the German people.

To-day, as ever, let this be our slogan: Down with Capitalists and Governments, all Capitalists and Governments!

Long live the peoples, all the peoples!

http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/malatesta/ForgottenPrinciples.html

A Prophetic Letter to Luigi Fabbri

Errico Malatesta on the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Errico Malatesta

2005

London, July 30, 1919
Dearest Fabbri,[4]

(...) It seems to me that we are in perfect agreement on the matters with which you are currently so preoccupied, to wit, the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

By my reckoning, on this score the opinion of anarchists cannot be called into question, and in fact, well before the Bolshevik revolution, it never was queried by anyone. Anarchy means no government, and thus, all the more emphatically, no dictatorship, meaning an absolute government, uncontrolled and without constitutional restraints. But whenever the Bolshevik revolution broke out, it appears that our friends may have confused what constitutes a revolution against an existing government with what was implied by a new government which had just dominated the revolution in order to apply the brakes to it and steer it in the direction of its party political purposes. And so our friends have all but declared themselves Bolsheviks.

Now, the Bolsheviks are merely marxists who have remained honest, conscientious marxists, unlike their teachers and models, the likes of Guesde, Plekhanov, Hyndman, Scheidemann, Noske, etc.,[5] whose fate

[4] Luigi Fabbri (1877–1938), Italian anarchist writer and militant, author of *Dictatorship and Revolution*.

[5] Jules Guesde (1845- 1922), social democrat leader, after having been an anarchist and then pioneer of marxism in France. Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918), a Russian populist turned marxist in exile: pioneered marxism in Russia: mentor and collaborator of Lenin, before breaking with him in order to condemn the Bolshevik seizure of power in

you know. We respect their sincerity, we admire their energy, but, just as we have never seen eye to eye with them in theoretical matters, so we could not align ourselves with them when they make the transition from theory to practice.

But perhaps the truth is simply this: our pro-Bolshevik friends take the expression "dictatorship of the proletariat" to mean simply the revolutionary action of the workers in taking possession of the land and the instruments of labor, and trying to build a society and organize a way of life in which there will be no place for a class that exploits and oppresses the producers.

Thus construed, the "dictatorship of the proletariat" would be the effective power of all workers trying to bring down capitalist society and would thus turn into Anarchy as soon as resistance from reactionaries would have ceased and no one can any longer seek to compel the masses by violence to obey and work for him. In which case, the discrepancy between us would be nothing more than a question of semantics. Dictatorship of the proletariat would signify the dictatorship of everybody, which is to say, it would be a dictatorship no longer, just as government by everybody is no longer a government in the authoritarian, historical and practical sense of the word.

But the real supporters of "dictatorship of the proletariat" do not take that line, as they are making quite plain in Russia. Of course, the proletariat has a hand in this, just as the people has a part to play in democratic regimes, that is to say, to conceal the reality of things. In reality, what we have is the dictatorship of one party, or rather, of one party's leaders: a genuine dictatorship, with its decrees, its penal sanctions, its henchmen and, above all, its armed forces which are at present also deployed in the defense of the revolution against its external enemies, but which will tomorrow be used to impose the dictators' will upon the workers, to apply a brake on revolution, to consolidate the new interests in the process of emerging and protect a new privileged class against the masses.

General Bonaparte was another one who helped defend the French Revolution against the European reaction, but in defending it, he strangled the life out of it. Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades are assuredly sincere revolutionaries (...) and they will not be turning traitors-but

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1917. Henry Hyndman (1842–1921), founder of laborism, after having been a pioneer of marxism in England. Philip Schedidemann (1864–1935), German Social Democrat chancellor in 1919. Gustav Noske (1868–1946), right-wing Social Democrat, governor of Kid in 1918, joined the counter revolutionary council of people's commissars at the start of 1919, then went on to become Army minister, organizing the repression of the post-war revolutionary movements.

they are preparing the governmental structures which those who will come after them will utilize to exploit the Revolution and do it to death. They will be the first victims of their methods and I am afraid that the Revolution will go under with them.

History repeats itself: *mutatis mutandis*, it was Robespierre's dictatorship that brought Robespierre to the guillotine and paved the way for Napoleon.

Such are my general thoughts on affairs in Russia. As for detailed news we have had, it i s as yet too varied and too contradictory to merit risking an opinion. It may be, too, that lots of things that strike us as bad are the products of that situation, and, in Russia's particular circumstances, there was no option but to do what they have done. We would do better to wait, especially as anything we will say cannot have any influence upon the course of events in Russia and might be misinterpreted in Italy and appear to echo the reaction's partisan calumnies.

Pages 391–392 of *No Gods, No Masters* edited by Daniel Guérin.

Footnotes added by Daniel Guérin.

The Idea of Good Government

Errico Malatesta

1920

None can judge with certainty who is right and who is wrong, who is nearest the truth, or which is the best way to achieve the greatest good for each and everyone. Freedom coupled with experience, is the only way of discovering the truth and what is best; and there can be no freedom if there is a denial of the freedom to err.

But when one talks of freedom politically, and not philosophically, nobody thinks of the metaphysical bogy of abstract man who exists outside the cosmic and social environment and who, like some god, "could do what he wishes" in the absolute sense of the word.

When one talks of freedom one is speaking of a society in which no one could constrain his fellow beings without meeting with vigorous resistance, in which, above all, nobody could seize and use the collective force to impose his wishes on others and on the very groups which are the source of power.

Man is not perfect, agreed. But this is one reason more, perhaps the strongest reason, for not giving anyone the means to "put the brakes on individual freedom".

Man is not perfect. But then where will one also find men who are not only good enough to live at peace with others, but also capable of controlling the lives of others in an authoritarian way? And assuming that there were, who would appoint them? Would they impose themselves? But who would protect them from the resistance and the violence of the "criminals"? Or would they be chosen by the "sovereign people", which is considered too ignorant and too wicked to live in peace, but which suddenly acquires all the necessary good qualities when it is a question of asking it to choose its rulers?

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An Anarchist Programme

Errico Malatesta

1920

1. Aims and Objectives

We believe that most of the ills that afflict mankind stem from a bad social organisation; and that Man could destroy them if he wished and knew how.

Present society is the result of age-long struggles of man against man. Not understanding the advantages that could accrue for all by cooperation and solidarity; seeing in every other man (with the possible exception of those closest to them by blood ties) a competitor and an enemy, each one of them sought to secure for himself, the greatest number of advantages possible without giving a thought to the interests of others.

In such a struggle, obviously the strongest or more fortunate were bound to win, and in one way or another subject and oppress the losers.

So long as Man was unable to produce more than was strictly needed to keep alive, the conquerors could do no more than put to flight or massacre their victims, and seize the food they had gathered.

Then when with the discovery of grazing and agriculture a man could produce more, than what he needed to live, the conquerors found it more profitable to reduce the conquered to a state of slavery, and put them to work for their advantage.

Later, the conquerors realised that it was more convenient, more profitable and certain to exploit the labour of others by other means: to retain for themselves the exclusive right to the land and working implements, and set free the disinherited who, finding themselves without the means of life, were obliged to have recourse to the landowners and work for them, on their terms.

Thus, step by step through a most complicated series of struggles of every description, of invasions, wars, rebellions, repressions, concessions won by struggle, associations of the oppressed united for defence, and of the conquerors for attack, we have arrived at the present state of society, in which some have inherited the land and all social wealth, while the mass of the people, disinherited in all respects, is exploited and oppressed by a small possessing class.

From all this stems the misery in which most workers live today, and which in turn creates the evils such as ignorance, crime, prostitution, diseases due to malnutrition, mental depression and premature death. From all this arises a special class (government) which, provided with the necessary means of repression, exists to legalise and protect the owning class from the demands of the workers; and then it uses the powers at its disposal to create privileges for itself and to subject, if it can, the owning class itself as well. From this the creation of another

privileged class (the clergy), which by a series of fables about the will of God, and about an after-life etc., seeks to persuade the oppressed to accept oppression meekly, and (just as the government does), as well as serving the interest of the owning class, serves its own. From this the creation of an official science which, in all those matters serving the interests of the ruling class, is the negation of true science. From this the patriotic spirit, race hatred, wars and armed peace, sometimes more disastrous than wars themselves. From this the transformation of love into torment or sordid commerce. From this hatred, more or less disguised, rivalry, suspicion among all men, insecurity and universal fear...

We want to change radically such a state of affairs. And since all these ills have their origin in the struggle between men, in the seeking after well-being through one's own efforts and for oneself and against everybody, we want to make amends, replacing hatred by love, competition by solidarity, the individual search for personal well-being by the fraternal cooperation for the well-being of all, oppression and imposition by liberty, the religious and pseudo-scientific lie by truth.

Therefore:

1. Abolition of private property in land, in raw materials and the instruments of labour, so that no one shall have the means of living by the exploitation of the labour of others, and that everybody, being assured of the means to produce and to live, shall be truly independent and in a position to unite freely among themselves for a common objective and according to their personal sympathies.

2. Abolition of government and of every power which makes the law and imposes it on others: therefore abolition of monarchies, republics, parliaments, armies, police forces, magistratures and any institution whatsoever endowed with coercive powers.

3. Organisation of social life by means of free association and federations of producers and consumers, created and modified according to the wishes of their members, guided by science and experience, and free from any kind of imposition which does not spring from natural needs, to which everyone, convinced by a feeling of over, riding necessity, voluntarily submits.

4. The means of life, for development and well-being, will be guaranteed to children and all who are prevented from providing for themselves.

5. War on religions and all lies, even if they shelter under the cloak of science. Scientific instruction for all to advanced level.
6. War on rivalries and patriotic prejudices. Abolition of frontiers; brotherhood among all peoples.
7. Reconstruction of the family, as will emerge from the practice of love, freed from every legal tie, from every economic and physical oppression, from every religious prejudice.

This is our ideal.

2. Ways and Means

We have outlined under a number of headings our objectives and the ideal for which we struggle.

But it is not enough to desire something; if one really wants it adequate means must be used to secure it, And these means are not arbitrary, but instead cannot but be conditioned by the ends we aspire to and by the circumstances in which the struggle takes place, for if we ignore the choice of means we would achieve other ends, possibly diametrically opposed to those we aspire to, and this would be the obvious and inevitable consequence of our choice of means. Whoever sets out on the highroad and takes a wrong turning does not go where he intends to go but where the road leads him.

It is therefore necessary to state what are the means which in our opinion lead to our desired ends, and which we propose to adopt.

Our ideal is not one which depends for its success on the individual considered in isolation. The question is of changing the way of life of society as a whole; of establishing among men relationships based on love and solidarity; of achieving the full material, moral and intellectual development not for isolated individuals, or members of one class or of a particular political party, but for all mankind-and this is not something that can be imposed by force, but must emerge through the enlightened consciences of each one of us and be achieved with the free consent of all.

Our first task therefore must be to persuade people.

We must make people aware of the misfortunes they suffer and of their chances to destroy them. We must awaken sympathy in everybody for the misfortunes of others and a warm desire for the good of all people.

To those who are cold and hungry we will demonstrate how possible and easy it could be to assure to everybody their material needs. To those

who are oppressed and despised we shall show how it is possible to live happily in a world of people who are free and equal; to those who are tormented by hatred and bitterness we will point to the road that leads to peace and human warmth that comes through learning to love one's fellow beings.

And when we will have succeeded in arousing the sentiment of rebellion in the minds of men against the avoidable and unjust evils from which we suffer in society today, and in getting them to understand how they are caused and how it depends on human will to rid ourselves of them; and when we will have created a lively and strong desire in men to transform society for the good of all, then those who are convinced, will by their own efforts as well as by the example of those already convinced, unite and want to as well as be able to act for their common ideals.

As we have already pointed out, it would be ridiculous and contrary to our objectives to seek to impose freedom, love among men and the radical development of human faculties, by means of force. One must therefore rely on the free will of others, and all we can do is to provoke the development and the expression of the will of the people. But it would be equally absurd and contrary to our aims to admit that those who do not share our views should prevent us from expressing our will, so long as it does not deny them the same freedom.

Freedom for all, therefore, to propagate and to experiment with their ideas, with no other limitation than that which arises naturally from the equal liberty of everybody.

But to this are opposed–and with brute force–those who benefit from existing privileges and who today dominate and control all social life.

In their hands they have all the means of production; and thus they suppress not only the possibility of free experimentation in new ways of communal living, and the right of workers to live freely by their own efforts, but also the right to life itself; and they oblige whoever is not a boss to have to allow himself to be exploited and oppressed if he does not wish to die of hunger.

They have police forces, a judiciary, and armies created for the express purpose of defending their privileges; and they persecute, imprison and massacre those who would want to abolish those privileges and who claim the means of life and liberty for everyone.

Jealous of their present and immediate interests, corrupted by the spirit of domination, fearful of the future, they, the privileged class,

are, generally speaking incapable of a generous gesture; are equally incapable of a wider concept of their interests. And it would be foolish to hope that they should freely give up property and power and adapt themselves to living as equals and with those who today they keep in subjection.

Leaving aside the lessons of history (which demonstrates that never has a privileged class divested itself of all or some of its privileges, and never has a government abandoned its power unless obliged to do so by force or the fear of force), there is enough contemporary evidence to convince anyone that the bourgeoisie and governments intend to use armed force to defend themselves, not only against complete expropriation, but equally against the smallest popular demands, and are always ready to engage in the most atrocious persecutions and the bloodiest massacres.

For those people who want to emancipate themselves. only one course is open: that of opposing force with force.

It follows from what we have said that we have to work to awaken in the oppressed the conscious desire for a radical social transformation, and to persuade them that by uniting they have the strength to win; we must propagate our ideal and prepare the required material and moral forces to overcome those of the enemy, and to organise the new society, and when we will have the strength needed we must, by taking advantage of favourable circumstances as they arise, or which we can ourselves create, to make the social revolution, by using force to destroy the government and to expropriate the owners of wealth, and by putting in common the means of life and production, and by preventing the setting up of new governments which would impose their will and to hamper the reorganisation of society by the people themselves.

All this is however less simple than it might appear at first sight. We have to deal with people as they are in society today, in the most miserable moral and material condition; and we would be deluding ourselves in thinking that propaganda is enough to raise them to that level of intellectual development which is needed to put our ideas into effect.

Between man and his social environment there is a reciprocal action. Men make society what it is and society makes men what they are, and the result is therefore a kind of vicious circle. To transform society men must be changed, and to transform men, society must be changed.

Poverty brutalises man, and to abolish poverty men must have a social conscience and determination. Slavery teaches men to be slaves, and to free oneself from slavery there is a need for men who aspire to liberty. Ignorance has the effect of making men unaware of the causes of their misfortunes as well as the means of overcoming them, and to do away with ignorance people must have the time and the means to educate themselves.

Governments accustom people to submit to the Law and to believe that Law is essential to society; and to abolish government men must be convinced of the uselessness and the harmfulness of government.

How does one escape from this vicious circle?

Fortunately existing society has not been created by the inspired will of a dominating class, which has succeeded in reducing all its subjects to passive and unconscious instruments of its interests. It is the result of a thousand internecine struggles, of a thousand human and natural factors acting indifferently, without directive criteria; and thus there are no clear-cut divisions either between individuals or between classes.

Innumerable are the variations in material conditions; innumerable are the degrees of moral and intellectual development; and not always—we would almost say very rarely, does the place of any individual in society correspond with his abilities and his aspirations. Very often individuals accustomed to conditions of comfort fall on hard times and others, through exceptionally favourable circumstances succeed in raising themselves above the conditions into which they were born. A large proportion of the working class has already succeeded either in emerging from a state of abject poverty, or was never in such a situation; no worker to speak of, finds himself in a state of complete social unawareness, of complete acquiescence to the conditions imposed on him by the bosses. And the same institutions, such as have been produced by history, contain organic contradictions and are like the germs of death, which as they develop result in the dissolution of institutions and the need for transformation.

From this the possibility of progress–but not the possibility of bringing all men to the necessary level to want, and to achieve, anarchy, by means of propaganda, without a previous gradual transformation of the environment.

Progress must advance contemporaneously and along parallel lines between men and their environment. We must take advantage of all the means, all the possibilities and the opportunities that the present environment allows us to act on our fellow men and to develop their consciences and their demands; we must use all advance in human consciences to induce them to claim and to impose those major social trans-

formations which are possible and which effectively serve to open the way to further advances later.

We must not wait to achieve anarchy, in the meantime limiting ourselves to simple propaganda. Were we to do so we would soon exhaust our field of action; that is, we would have converted all those who in the existing environment are susceptible to understand and accept our ideas, and our subsequent propaganda would fall on sterile ground; or if environmental transformations brought out new popular groupings capable of receiving new ideas, this would happen without our participation, and thus would prejudice our ideas.

We must seek to get all the people, or different sections of the people, to make demands, and impose itself and take for itself all the improvements and freedoms that it desires as and when it reaches the state of wanting them, and the power to demand them; and in always propagating all aspects of our programme, and always struggling for its complete realisation, we must push the people to want always more and to increase its pressures, until it has achieved complete emancipation.

3. The Economic Struggle

The oppression which today impinges most directly on the workers and which is the main cause of the moral and material frustrations under which they labour, is economic oppression, that is the exploitation to which bosses and business men subject them, thanks to their monopoly of all the most important means of production and distribution.

To destroy radically this oppression without any danger of it re-emerging, all people must be convinced of their right to the means of production, and be prepared to exercise this basic right by expropriating the land owners, the industrialists and financiers, and putting all social wealth at the disposal of the people.

But can this expropriation be put into effect today? Can we today pass directly, without intermediate' steps, from the hell in which the workers now find themselves to the paradise of common property?

Facts demonstrate what the workers are capable of today.

Our task is the moral and material preparation of the people for this essential expropriation; and to attempt it again and again, every time a revolutionary upheaval offers us the chance to, until the final triumph. But in what way can we prepare the people? In what way must one prepare the conditions which make possible not only the material fact of

expropriation, but the utilisation to everybody's advantage of the common wealth?

We have already said that spoken and written propaganda alone cannot win over to our ideas the mass of the people. A practical education is needed, which must be alternately cause and effect in a gradual transformation of the environment. Parallel with the workers developing a sense of rebellion against the injustices and useless sufferings of which they are the victims, and the desire to better their conditions, they must be united and mutually dependent in the struggle to achieve their demands. And we as anarchists and workers, must incite and encourage them to struggle, and join them in their struggle.

But are these improvements possible in a capitalist regime? Are they useful from the point of view of a future complete emancipation of the workers?

Whatever may be the practical results of the struggle for immediate gains, the greatest value lies in the struggle itself. For thereby workers learn that the bosses interests are opposed to theirs and that they cannot improve their conditions, and much less emancipate themselves, except by uniting and becoming stronger than the bosses. If they succeed in getting what they demand, they will be better off: they will earn more, work fewer hours and will have more time and energy to reflect on the things that matter to them, and will immediately make greater demands and have greater needs. If they do not succeed they will be led to study the causes of their failure and recognise the need for closer unity and greater activity and they will in the end understand that to make their victory secure and definitive, it is necessary to destroy capitalism. The revolutionary cause, the cause of the moral elevation and emancipation of the workers must benefit by the fact that workers unite and struggle for their interests.

But, once again, can the workers succeed in really improving their conditions in the present state of society?

This depends on the confluence of a great number of circumstances.

In spite of what some say, there exists no natural law (law of wages) which determines what part of a worker's labour should go to him; or if one wants to formulate a law, it could not be but that; wages cannot normally be less than what is needed to maintain life, nor can they normally rise such that no profit margin is left to the boss.

It is clear that in the first case workers would die, and therefore would stop drawing any wages, and in the second the bosses would stop employing labour and so would pay no more wages. But between these two impossible extremes there is an infinite scale of degrees ranging from

the miserable conditions of many land workers to the almost respectable conditions of skilled workers in the large cities.

Wages, hours and other conditions of employment are the result of the struggle between bosses and workers. The former try to give the workers as little as possible and get them to work themselves to the bone; the latter try, or should try to work as little, and earn as much, as possible. Where workers accept any conditions, or even being discontented, do not know how to put up effective resistance to the bosses demands, they are soon reduced to bestial conditions of life. Where, instead, they have ideas as to how human beings should live and know how to join forces, and through refusal to work or the latent and open threat of rebellion, to win the bosses respect, in such cases, they are treated in a relatively decent way. One can therefore say that within certain limits, the wages he gets are what the worker (not as an individual. of course. but as a class) demands.

Through struggle, by resistance against the bosses, therefore, workers can up to a certain point, prevent a worsening of their conditions as well as obtaining real improvement. And the history of the workers' movement has already demonstrated this truth.

One must not however exaggerate the importance of this struggle between workers and bosses conducted exclusively in the economic field. Bosses can give in. and often they do in face of forcefully expressed demands so long as the demands are not too great; but if workers were to make demands (and it is imperative that they should) which would absorb all the bosses profits and be in effect an indirect form of expropriation, it is certain that the bosses would appeal to the government and would seek to use force to oblige the workers to remain in their state of wage slavery.

And even before, long before workers can expect to receive the full product of their labour, the economic struggle becomes impotent as a means of producing the improvements in living standards.

Workers produce everything and without them life would be impossible; therefore it would seem that by refusing to work they could demand whatever they wanted. But the union of all workers, even in one particular trade, and in one country is difficult to achieve, and opposing the union of workers are the bosses organisations. Workers live from day to day, and if they do not work they soon find themselves without food; whereas the bosses, because they have money, have access to all the goods in stock and can therefore sit back and wait until hunger reduces their employees to a more amenable frame of mind. The invention or the introduction of new machinery makes workers redundant and adds to the large army of unemployed, who are driven by hunger to

sell their labour at any price. Immigration immediately creates problems in the countries where better working conditions exist, for the hordes of hungry workers, willy nilly, offer the bosses an opportunity' to depress wages all round. And all these facts, which necessarily derive from the capitalist system, conspire in counteracting and often destroying advances made in working class consciousness and solidarity. And in every case the overriding fact remains that production under capitalism is organised by each capitalist for his personal profit and not, as would be natural, to satisfy the needs of the workers in the best possible way. Hence the chaos, the waste of human effort, the organised scarcity of goods, useless and harmful occupations, unemployment, abandoned land, under-use of plant and so on, all evils which cannot be avoided except by depriving the capitalists of the means of production and, it follows, the organisation of production.

Soon then, those workers who want to free themselves, or even only to effectively improve their conditions, will be faced with the need to defend themselves from the government, with the need to attack the government, which by legalising the right to property and protecting it with brute force, constitutes a barrier to human progress, which must be beaten down with force if one does not wish to remain indefinitely under present conditions or even worse.

From the economic struggle one must pass to the political struggle, that is to the struggle against government; and instead of opposing the capitalist millions with the workers' few pennies scraped together with difficulty, one must oppose the rifles and guns which defend property with the more effective means that the people will be able to find to defeat force by force.

4. The Political Stuggle

By the political struggle we mean the struggle against government. Government is the ensemble of all those individuals who hold the reins of power, however acquired, to make the law and to impose it on the governed, that is the public.

Government is the consequence of the spirit of domination and violence with which some men have imposed themselves on other, and is at the same time the creature as well as the creator of privilege and its natural defender.

It is wrongly said that today government performs the function of defender of capitalism but that once capitalism is abolished it would be-

come the representative and administrator of the general interest. In the first place capitalism will not be destroyed until the workers, having rid themselves of government, take possession of all social wealth and themselves organise production and consumption in the interests of everybody without waiting for the initiative to come from government which, however willing to comply, would be incapable of doing so.

But there is a further question: if capitalism were to be destroyed and a government were to be left in office, the government, through the concession of all kinds of privileges, would create capitalism anew for, being unable to please everybody it would need an economically powerful class to support it in return for the legal and material protection it would receive.

Consequently privilege cannot be abolished and freedom and equality established firmly and definitely without abolishing government–not this or that government but the very institution of government.

As in all questions of general interest, and especially this one, the consent of the people as a whole is needed, and therefore we must strain every nerve to persuade the people that government is useless as well as harmful, and that we can live better lives without government.

But, as we have, repeated more than once, propaganda alone is impotent to convince everybody–and if we were to want to limit ourselves to preaching against government, and in the meantime waiting supinely for the day when the public will be convinced of the possibility and value of radically destroying every kind of government, then that day would never come.

While preaching against every kind of government, and demanding complete freedom, we must support all struggles for partial freedom, because we are convinced that one learns through struggle, and that once one begins to enjoy a little freedom one ends by wanting it all We must always be with the people, and when we do not succeed in getting them to, demand a lot we must still seek to get them to want something; and we must make every effort to get them to understand that however much or little they may demand should be obtained by their own efforts and that they should despise and detest whoever is part of, or aspires to, government.

Since the government today has the power, through the legal system, to regulate daily life and to broaden or restrict the liberty of the citizen, and because we are still unable to tear this power from its grasp, we must seek to reduce its power and oblige governments to use it in the least harmful ways possible. But this we must do always remaining outside, and against, government, putting pressure on it through agitation in the streets, by threatening to take by force what we demand. Never

must we accept any kind of legislative position, be it national or local, for in so doing we will neutralise the effectiveness of our activity as well as betraying the future of our cause.

The struggle against government in the last analysis, is physical, material.

Governments make the law. They must therefore dispose of the material forces (police and army) to impose the law, for otherwise only those who wanted to would obey it, and it would no longer be the law, but a simple series of suggestions which all would be free to accept or reject. Governments have this power, however, and use it through the law, to strengthen their power, as well as to serve the interests of the ruling classes, by oppressing and exploiting the workers.

The only limit to the oppression of government is the power with which the people show themselves capable of opposing it. Conflict may be open or latent; but it always exists since the government does not pay attention to discontent and popular resistance except when it is faced with the danger of insurrection.

When the people meekly submit to the law, or their protests are feeble and confined to words, the government studies its own interests and ignores the needs of the people; when the protests are lively, insistent, threatening, the government, depending on whether it is more or less understanding, gives way or resorts to repression. But one always comes back to insurrection, for if the government does not give way, the people will end by rebelling; and if the government does give way, then the people gain confidence in themselves and make ever increasing demands, until such time as the incompatibility between freedom and authority becomes clear and the violent struggle is engaged.

It is therefore necessary to be prepared, morally and materially, so that when this does happen the people will emerge victorious.

A successful insurrection is the most potent factor in the emancipation of the people, for once the yoke has been shaken off, the people are free to provide themselves with those institutions which they think best, and the time lag between passing the law and the degree of civilisation which the mass of the population has attained, is breached in one leap. The insurrection determines the revolution, that is, the speedy emergence of the latent forces built up during the “evolutionary” period.

Everything depends on what the people are capable of wanting.

In past insurrections unaware of the real reasons for their misfortunes, they have always wanted very little, and have obtained very little.

What will they want in the next insurrection?

The answer, in part, depends on our propaganda and what efforts we put into it.

We shall have to push the people to expropriate the bosses and put all goods in common and organise their daily lives themselves, through freely constituted associations, without waiting for orders from outside and refusing to nominate or recognise any government or constituted body in whatever guise (constituent. dictatorship. etc.) even in a provisional capacity, which ascribes to itself the right to lay down the law and impose with force its will on others.

And if the mass of the population will not respond to our appeal we must—in the name of the right we have to be free even if others wish to remain slaves and because of the force of example—put into effect as many of our ideas as we can, refuse to recognise the new government and keep alive resistance and seek that those localities where our ideas are received with sympathy should constitute themselves into anarchist communities, rejecting all governmental interference and establishing free agreements with other communities which want to live their own lives.

We shall have to, above all, oppose with every means the re-establishment of the police and the armed forces, and use any opportunity to incite workers in non anarchist localities to take advantage of the absence of repressive forces to implement the most far reaching demands that we can induce them to make.

And however things may go, to continue the struggle against the possessing class and the rulers without respite, having always in mind the complete economic, political and moral emancipation of all mankind.

5. Conclusion

What we want, therefore, is the complete destruction of the domination and exploitation of man by man; we want men united as brothers by a conscious and desired solidarity, all cooperating voluntarily for the well-being of all: we want society to be constituted for the purpose of supplying everybody with the means for achieving the maximum well-being, the maximum possible moral and spiritual development; we want bread, freedom, love, and science for everybody.

And in order to achieve these all-important ends, it is necessary in our opinion that the means of production should be at the disposal of everybody and that no man, or groups of men, should be in a position to oblige others to submit to their will or to exercise their influence other than through the power of reason and by example.

Therefore: expropriation of landowners and capitalists for the benefit of all; and abolition of government.

And while waiting for the day when this can be achieved: the propagation of our ideas; unceasing struggle, violent or non-violent depending on the circumstances, against government and against the boss class to conquer as much freedom and well-being as we can for the benefit of everybody.

www.infoshop.org

Taken from Malatesta: His Life & Ideas ed. Vernon Richards. London: Freedom Press, 1993. Il Programma Anarchico was drafted by Errico Malatesta and adopted by the Unione Anarchica Italiana at its Congress in Bologna (1920).

The Revolutionary “Haste”

Errico Malatesta

September 6, 1921

Let us deal again with G. Valenti’s article republished by the Reggio Emilia newspaper *Giustizia*.

Valenti dwells on enumerating all the masses that are indifferent or hostile to subversive propaganda. Writing about the United States, he claims that there are 60 (?) million Catholics organized in religious associations who go to church and pray God, and he invites the anarchists to go and make propaganda among those 60 millions, if they want to speed up the revolution. He claims that only 4 and a half million producers out of 40 million are organized in organizations, the majority of which, as a matter of fact, are still opposed to socialism; he also invites trade unionists to start working at organizing workers in unions, if they really want to speed up the revolution. He claims that only one million voters out of twenty-five million voted for Debs in the last polls, he recalls that in the South socialist speakers get beaten and driven out of towns by mobs intoxicated with patriotism; finally, he invites communists to go and propagandize their 21 points in the South, instead of “bugging socialists into accepting them”.

This is all too true and right, if it means that we have to make propaganda and do our best to win over as many individuals, as many masses as possible to the ideas of emancipation.

On the other hand, the argument is completely wrong if it means that the demolition of capitalism has to wait until those 60 million Catholics become free thinkers, all workers (or their majority) are organized for class struggle, and Debs gets out of prison thanks to the majority of voters.

Let us not misunderstand. It is an axiomatic, self-evident truth that a revolution can only be made when there is enough strength to make it.

However, it is an historical truth that the forces determining evolution and social revolutions cannot be reckoned with census papers.

Catholics in the United States and elsewhere will remain as numerous as they are, or even grow, as long as there is a class, holding the power of wealth and science, interested in keeping the masses in their intellectual slavery, in order to dominate them more easily. Workers will never be fully organized, and their organizations will always be subject to breaking down or degenerating, as long as poverty, unemployment, fear of losing one's job, desire to improve one's conditions feed the antagonism among workers, and give the masters the opportunity to profit from any circumstances and any crises to make the workers compete against each other. And voters will always be sheep by definition, even if sometimes they happen to kick back.

Given certain economic conditions and a certain social environment, it is proven that the intellectual and moral conditions of the masses stay basically the same. Until an external, ideally or materially violent event comes and changes that environment, propaganda, education and instruction remain helpless; they only act upon those individuals who can overcome the environment in which they are forced to live, in virtue of natural or social privileges. However, that small number, that self-conscious and rebellious minority born by every social order in consequence of those injustices to which the masses are subject, acts like a historical ferment, which suffices, as it always did, to make the world progress.

Every new idea and institution, all progress and every revolution have always been the work of minorities. It is our aspiration and our aim that everyone should become socially conscious and effective; but to achieve this end, it is necessary to provide all with the means of life and for development, and it is therefore necessary to destroy with violence, since one cannot do otherwise, the violence which denies these means to the workers.

Naturally, the "small numbers", the minority, must be sufficient, and those who imagine that we want to have an insurrection a day without taking into account the forces opposing us, or whether circumstances are in our favour or against us, misjudge us. In the, now remote, past, we were able, and did, carry out a number of minute insurrectionary acts which had no probability of success. But in those days we were indeed only a handful, and wanted the public to talk about us, and our attempts were simply means of propaganda.

Now it is no longer a question of uprising to make propaganda; now we can win, and so we want to win, and only take such action when we think we can win. Of course we can be mistaken, and on the grounds of

temperament may be led into believing that the fruit is ripe when it is still green; but we must confess our preference for those who err on the side of haste as opposed to those who always play a waiting game and let the best opportunities slip through their fingers for they, through fear of picking a green fruit then let the whole crop go rotten!

In conclusion, we completely agree with *La Giustizia* when it emphasizes the necessity of making a lot of propaganda and of developing proletarian struggle organizations as much as possible; but we definitely depart from it when it maintains that we should not take action until we have drawn the majority of that inert mass, which will only be converted by the events and will only accept the revolution after the revolution has begun.

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From Umanità Nova, n. 125, September 6, 1921

Further thoughts on the question of crime

Errico Malatesta

September 1921

Letter from Aldo Venturini

Bologna, September 8, 1921

Dearest Malatesta,

I read with great interest your two articles, recently appeared in *Umanità Nova.*, about the important and always worth discussing problem of crime.

No doubt your arguments in support of the solution we anarchists give to the question are indisputably clear and effective. However, let me insist on some of your ideas, which solve some aspects of the problem, but do so in a way either too general and abstract or too particular.

For example, you say: "For us the accomplishment of social duties must be voluntary, and one has a right to take a forcible action only against those who voluntary offend others and hinder a peaceful social coexistence. Force and physical constraint can only be used against a materially violent thrust, for sheer necessity of defence".

Going by the second part of your reasoning, it would almost look like only "a materially violent thrust" constitutes a violation of the justice principle that will be fundamental in the future society.

Why force and physical constraint, although limited and inspired by the idea of a sheer necessity of defence, should not be used also in those cases (unfortunately these will be aspects of the moralizing crime of the new social environment) in which a serious damage can be still caused to one's fellow men without exercising a "materially violent" act?

Is not the act of exercising material violence upon a person, to rob him of some belonging, equivalent to the act of succeeding in the same robbing without using any violence whatsoever?

Moreover, what is the difference between, say, someone who violently kills a fellow man and someone who drives him to die by exercising a criminal and shifty persuasion?

The foregoing is just an example, not to say that hundreds of cases could be mentioned in which the offence, the damage to someone else's life can happen without material violence.

On the other hand, there are a right violence and a wrong violence. Therefore, the injustice does not lie so much in the external act that carries it out, as in the fact itself that someone has to suffer *anyway* by someone else's nastiness and wickedness.

On this topic you say: "We do not see any other solution than leave decisions in the hands of those concerned, in the hands of the people, i.e. the mass of citizens, which will act differently according to the circumstances and to their own varying degree of civilization"

However, ‘people’ is too generic an expression here, hence the question remains unsolved.

This kind of reasoning seems to repeat the error made by Kropotkine, according to whom the people is supposed to do everything, and for him the people is only a generic multitude.

Saverio Merlino criticized very well this and other errors of Kropotkine’s idea of anarchism; and, arguing with you, he offers the following solution to the relevant problem of social defence in his book “Collectivist Utopia”: “Between the current system and the assumption that crime should cease, I believe there is room for intermediate forms of social defence that differ from a government function. Such social defence would be exercised under the people’s eyes and control in every place, as any other public service, like health, transportation, etc. and therefore it could not degenerate into an instrument of oppression and domination”.

Why should not we anarchists reach this concept? We want to abolish the present machinery of so called justice, with all its painful and inhuman aspects, but we do not want to replace it with either individual liberty or the crowd’s summary judgement. The sense of justice of men needs to be improved, and the forms of expressing and defending it need to be worked out.

I raised these modest objections to you, mainly to offer you the opportunity to come back to such an important topic, which needs to be discussed.

Consider me always

your loving

Aldo Venturini

Malatesta’s Reply

The criticism of our friend Venturini is quite right: however, I point out to him that I only expressed *some ideas* about the complex question of crime, with no intention to offer a solution valid for all possible cases.

I believe that all that can be said and done to fight crime can only have a relative value, depending on the time, the places, and above all the degree of moral development of the environment where the events take place. The problem of crime will only find an ultimate and completely adequate solution when… crime will no longer exist.

I know we are usually blamed for the vagueness and indeterminacy of our proposals to solve the most painful social problem. And I know that anarchists, unanimous in the destructive criticism of current morals and institutions, split up in the most diverse schools and tendencies, as soon as it comes to dealing with the problem of reconstruction and practical life in the future society.

However, this does not seem bad to me; on the contrary, it seems to me the main characteristic and merit of anarchism, which does not intend to fix the avenues of the future beforehand, but rather to simply guarantee the conditions of freedom necessary for the social evolution to eventually secure the greatest well-being and the greatest material, spiritual and intellectual development for all.

The authoritarians, the rulers, either believe they hold an infallible formula, or must pretend to hold it, as they intend to lay down and impose the law. However, all history shows that the law's only use is to defend, strengthen and perpetuate the interests and prejudices prevailing at the time the law is made, thus forcing mankind to move from revolution to revolution, from violence to violence.

On the contrary, we do not boast that we possess absolute truth; we believe that *social truth* is not a fixed quantity, good for all times, universally applicable, or determinable in advance, but that instead, once freedom has been secured, mankind will go forward discovering and acting gradually with the least number of upheavals and with a minimum of friction. Thus our solutions always leave the door open to different and, one hopes, better solutions.

It is true that in reality one has to take specific action, and cannot live without doing anything particular, always awaiting something better. However, today we can only run after an ideal, even if we know that ideals are not the only factors of history. In life, besides the drawing force of ideals, there are material conditions, habits, contrasts of interest and will, in brief, innumerable necessities which one has to submit to, in the everyday conduct. In practice, one does what one can: in any case, anarchists must stick to the mission of pushing towards their ideal, and preventing, or striving to prevent, that the inevitable flaws and the possible injustices be sanctioned by the law and perpetuated through the State's force, i.e. the force of all placed at the service of some.

Anyway, let us come back to the topic of crime.

As Venturini correctly points out, there are worse ways of offending justice and freedom than those committed by material violence, against which the resort to physical constraint can be necessary and urgent. Therefore I agree that the principle I put forward, i.e. that one has a right to resort to material force only against those who want to violate

someone else's right by material force, does not cover all the possible cases and cannot be regarded as absolute. Perhaps we would come closer to a more comprehensive formula by asserting the right to forcible self-defence against physical violence as well as against acts equivalent in manner and consequences to physical violence.

We are entering a case by case analysis though, which would require a survey of different cases, leading to a thousand different solutions, without touching the main point, the greatest difficulty of the question yet, i.e. *who would judge and who would carry out the judgements?*

I had claimed the need to *leave decisions in the hands of those concerned, in the hands of the people, i.e. the mass of citizens,* etc.

Venturini points out that 'people' is too generic an expression, and I agree with him. I am far from admiring "the people" as Kropotkine did. Although, on the other hand, he fixed up everything by calling the crowd 'people' only when it behaved in a way he liked. I know that the people is capable of anything: ferocious today, generous tomorrow, socialist one day, fascist another day, at one time it rises up against the priests and the Inquisition, at some other time it watches Giordano Bruno's stake praying and applauding, at one moment it is ready for any sacrifice and heroism, at some other moment it is subject to the worst influence of fear and greed. What can one do about that? One has to work with the available material, and try to get the best out of it.

Like Venturini, I do not want either individual liberty or the crowd's summary judgement; however, I could not accept the solution proposed by Merlino, who would like to organize the social defence against criminals as any other public service, like health, transportation, etc., because I fear the formation of a body of armed people, which would acquire all the flaws and present all the dangers of a police corps.

In the interest of a service, i.e. of the public, it is useful that railwaymen, for instance, specialize in their job, doctors and teachers entirely devote themselves to their arts; however, it is dangerous and corrupting, although technically advantageous perhaps, to allow someone to be a policeman or a judge by profession.

Everybody should take care of social defence, in the same way in which everybody promptly helps when public calamities occur.

To me a policeman is worse than a criminal, at least than a minor common criminal; a policeman is more dangerous and harmful to society. However, if people do not feel sufficiently protected by the public, no doubt they immediately call for the policeman. Therefore, the only way of preventing the policeman from existing is to make him useless by replacing him in those functions that constitute a real protection for the public.

I conclude with the words of Venturini: “The sense of justice of men needs to be improved, and the forms of expressing and defending it need to be worked out”.

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From Umanità Nova, n. 134, September 16, 1921

About my trial: Class Struggle or Class Hatred?

Errico Malatesta

1921

I expressed to the jury in Milan some ideas about class struggle and proletariat that raised criticism and amazement. I better come back to those ideas.

I protested indignantly against the accusation of inciting to hatred; I explained that in my propaganda I had always sought to demonstrate that the social wrongs do not depend on the wickedness of one master or the other, one governor or the other, but rather on masters and governments as institutions; therefore, the remedy does not lie in changing the individual rulers, instead it is necessary to demolish the principle itself by which men dominate over men; I also explained that I had always stressed that proletarians are not individually better than bourgeois, as shown by the fact that a worker behaves like an ordinary bourgeois, and even worse, when he gets by some accident to a position of wealth and command.

Such statements were distorted, counterfeited, put in a bad light by the bourgeois press, and the reason is clear. The duty of the press paid to defend the interests of police and sharks, is to hide the real nature of anarchism from the public, and seek to accredit the tale about anarchists being full of hatred and destroyers; the press does that by duty, but we have to acknowledge that they often do it in good faith, out of pure and simple ignorance. Since journalism, which once was a calling, decayed into mere job and business, journalists have lost not only their ethical sense, but also the intellectual honesty of refraining from talking about what they do not know.

Let us forget about hack writers, then, and let us talk about those who differ from us in their ideas, and often only in their way of expressing ideas, but still remain our friends, because they sincerely aim at the same goal we aim at.

Amazement is completely unmotivated in these people, so much so that I would tend to think it is affected. They cannot ignore that I have been saying and writing those things for fifty years, and that the same things have been said by hundreds and thousands of anarchists, at my same time and before me.

Let us rather talk about the dissent.

There are the "worker-minded" people, who consider having callous hands as being divinely imbued with all merits and all virtues; they protest if you dare talking about people and mankind, failing to swear on the sacred name of proletariat.

Now, it is a truth that history has made the proletariat the main instrument of the next social change, and that those fighting for the establishment of a society where *all* human beings are free and endowed with all the means to exercise their freedom, must rely mainly on the proletariat.

As today the hoarding of natural resources and capital created by the work of past and present generations is the main cause of the subjection of the masses and of all social wrongs, it is natural for those who have nothing, and therefore are more directly and clearly interested in sharing the means of production, to be the main agents of the necessary expropriation. This is why we address our propaganda more particularly to the proletarians, whose conditions of life, on the other hand, make it often impossible for them to rise and conceive a superior ideal. However, this is no reason for turning the poor into a fetish just because he is poor; neither it is a reason for encouraging him to believe that he is intrinsically superior, and that a condition surely not coming from his merit or his will gives him the right to do wrong to the others as the others did wrong to him. The tyranny of callous hands (which in practice is still the tyranny of few who no longer have callous hands, even if they had once), would not be less tough and wicked, and would not bear less lasting evils than the tyranny of gloved hands. Perhaps it would be less enlightened and more brutal: that is all.

Poverty would not be the horrible thing it is, if it did not produce moral brutishness as well as material harm and physical degradation, when prolonged from generation to generation. The poor have different faults than those produced in the privileged classes by wealth and power, but not better ones.

If the bourgeoisie produces the likes of Giolitti and Graziani and all the long succession of mankind's torturers, from the great conquerors to the avid and bloodsucking petty bosses, it also produces the likes of Cafiero, Reclus and Kropotkine, and the many people that in any epoch sacrificed their class privileges to an ideal. If the proletariat gave and gives so many heroes and martyrs of the cause of human redemption, it also gives off the white guards, the slaughterers, the traitors of their own brothers, without which the bourgeois tyranny could not last a single day.

How can hatred be raised to a principle of justice, to an enlightened spirit of demand, when it is clear that evil is everywhere, and it depends upon causes that go beyond individual will and responsibility?

Let there be as much class struggle as one wishes, if by class struggle one means the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters for the abolition of exploitation. That struggle is a way of moral and material elevation, and it is the main revolutionary force that can be relied on.

Let there be no hatred, though, because love and justice cannot arise from hatred. Hatred brings about revenge, desire to be over the enemy, need to consolidate one's superiority. Hatred can only be the foundation of new governments, if one wins, but it cannot be the foundation of anarchy.

Unfortunately, it is easy to understand the hatred of so many wretches whose bodies and sentiments are tormented and rent by society: however, as soon as the hell in which they live is lit up by an ideal, hatred disappears and a burning desire of fighting for the good of all takes over.

For this reason true haters cannot be found among our comrades, although there are many rhetoricians of hatred. They are like the poet, who is a good and peaceful father, but he sings of hatred, because this gives him the opportunity of composing good verses... or perhaps bad ones. They talk about hatred, but their hatred is made of love.

For this reason I love them, even if they call me names.

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At The Café

Conversations on Anarchism

Errico Malatesta

1922

INTRODUCTION

Malatesta began writing the series of dialogues that make up *At the Cafe: Conversations on Anarchism* in March 1897, while he was in hiding in Ancona and busy with the production of the periodical *L'Agitazione*. Luigi Fabbri, in his account of this period, written to introduce the 1922 edition of the full set of dialogues (*Bologna, Edizioni di Volontà*), edited by Malatesta (*Reprint, Torino, Sargraf, 1961*), gives us a beguiling picture of Malatesta, clean-shaven as a disguise, coming and going about the city, pipe in mouth, smiling impudently at his friends, who, for the sake of his safety, wished him elsewhere.

The idea of the dialogues was suggested to him by the fact that he often frequented a café that was not usually the haunt of subversives such as himself. Indeed, one of the regulars, who was a member of the police, used to engage Malatesta in conversation without, of course, as Fabbri notes, any idea that a real prize lay within his grasp. Anarchism would almost certainly have been one of the topics of conversation since the anarchists of the city constantly bombarded their fellow townspeople with a barrage of propaganda that occasioned frequent trials.

The form that the dialogues were to take was drawn then from an actual venue and from Malatesta's own experience. It resulted in a literary device excellently well suited to his particular genius, which is his ability to render complex ideas into straightforward language and to make them directly accessible. The dialogue form also allowed Malatesta to debate the ideas of his opponents, while subjecting his own anarchist views to a critical scrutiny aimed at communicating to his readers their political import and their practical applicability. Indeed one of the strengths of the dialogues is the absence of straw men. The inquisition of anarchism is searching and genuine, often highlighting what its opponents would regard as points of weakness and vulnerability. It makes Malatesta's spirited defence all the more impressive.

Towards the end of 1897 Malatesta was identified and discovered by the Ancona police. He was arrested and then released. Immediately he began a round of lectures, abandoning both his journal and the unfinished dialogues. In 1898 he was placed under house arrest and in March 1899 he fled abroad, once more becoming a refugee. The dialogues remained interrupted at number ten, and in this form they were published, both in journals and as a pamphlet.

The chief propagandists of the first ten dialogues are Malatesta's alter ego, Giorgio, an anarchist, Prospero, a wealthy member of the bourgeoisie, Cesare, a shopkeeper and Ambrogio, a magistrate. Malatesta is

thus able to reflect a range of political positions and views drawn from a wide spectrum of society. If Prospero speaks for wealth and privilege, Cesare speaks for the smaller property owners and the middle classes. He shows an awareness of social problems and appears amenable to persuasion by Giorgio, but he also exhibits a concern that any solution must not be allowed to disrupt the existing social order. Ambrogio is the voice of the law and the liberal state and of accepted ideas on rights and justice. He is also, as Giorgio's chief opponent, the one who expresses common sense views about human nature and human behaviour. His views contain a liberal expression of rights theory, tempered by what he would claim as recognition of the limits imposed on liberty by the inescapable dictates of reality. The result is a broad canvas on which Malatesta is able, in responding to the various viewpoints and in answering the numerous criticisms that Giorgio's views elicit, to paint a skilfully drawn and detailed picture of an anarchist view of the world.

In a relatively short space Malatesta introduces us to all of the basic doctrines of communist anarchism and considers one by one many of the major objections to his position. After setting the scene, it is private property and property rights that become the focus of attention. In Dialogues Two, Three and Four it is argued that the causes of poverty are located in the nature of the property system and its associated class structure and a forceful attack is mounted on the right to private property and the capitalist system, with incidental discussions of Malthus and free trade. At the same time the notions of a complete change in the property regime and the creation of a society without government are introduced. The origin of property and property rights are considered in Dialogue Five, and Giorgio maintains that property rights must be abolished if exploitation is to be avoided. In Dialogue Six the case for common ownership is made and the idea of communism introduced. This discussion of communism continues in Dialogue Seven with opposition to it as a tyrannical and oppressive system being strongly maintained by Ambrogio in the name of abstract liberty. Giorgio counters with a depiction of anarchist society as a voluntary, complex federation of associations, and in the process contrasts the anarchist form of free communism with that of the authoritarian school. Dialogue Eight moves the focus to the question of government and the state and how a society can function in their absence. In the process there is an extended critique of parliamentarianism and representation, and a defence of anarchism as a social order maintained by free agreement and voluntary delegation. The argument continues into the next Dialogue (Dialogue Nine) where the objections to a society without government are again rehearsed and Giorgio further develops a form of Kropotkin's argument

about the universality of mutual aid, an idea first introduced in Dialogue Six. Discourse Ten strikes out in a new direction, focussing on sex, love and the family. In covering many issues related to feminism any inherent basis for gender inequality is persuasively dismissed.

It was 15 years later, in 1913, that Malatesta returned to the dialogues. At this time he had once more established himself in Ancona and had begun the publication of his new journal *Volontà*. In this new publication he republished the original ten dialogues, in an edited and corrected form, and added four more. Initially, in Dialogues Eleven and Twelve, it is once again Cesare, Prospero and Ambrogio who are Giorgio's interlocutors. The issue of criminality is raised in Dialogue Eleven. How do we deal with criminals in the absence of government, law, courts or prisons? Giorgio answers that the issue must be dealt with communally. From here the discussion moves on to a contrast between mental and manual labour and the old chestnut of who is to do the jobs that nobody wants to do. Won't everyone want to be a poet? The usual answer is provided, that is a voluntary rotation of tasks and the development of multiple skills by community members. Dialogue Twelve investigates the need for revolution, and a case is made for the sad necessity of a violent revolution, since the existing order is maintained by violence and the privileged classes will not surrender their hold on power unless it is shaken loose.

In Dialogue Thirteen we meet a new character, Vincenzo, a young Republican, and a discussion ensues regarding the merits and limitations of a republican approach to change. Its chief defect is identified as a reliance on government and on systems of democratic representation. Republicanism is not, it is argued, as radical as its supporters believe since it remains prey to the evils of the existing political system. The last dialogue of this new series (Dialogue Fourteen) returns to the theme of revolution. What Giorgio emphasises is that anarchism in its desire to remove the state and government is a new factor in history and proposes changes quite different and more profound than previous revolutions which aimed simply at changing the political regime.

Once more the dialogues were to be interrupted by political events. In June 1914, as the storm clouds of World War I gathered, serious popular risings broke out in the Marches and Romagna, in what became known as Red Week. Malatesta was involved in these popular struggles and, as a result, was forced to take refuge in London. Six years passed and Malatesta returned to Italy, establishing himself in Milan, where he edited the Newspaper *Umanità Nova*. He was too busy, Fabbri notes, to give his attention to the old dialogues, and he did not intend to add to them. However, Fabbri informs us that someone or other who spent a

fortnight with him as a guest persuaded him to continue with the project. The mysterious guest must, one would think, have been Fabbri himself. The result was a further three dialogues, a continuation rather than a conclusion, since there is no obvious point of closure.

In these last three essays some old topics are revisited and some new themes, of contemporary significance, receive attention. Dialogue Fifteen introduces Gino, a worker, and canvasses the fears of ordinary people about a lack of civil order in the proposed stateless society and the perceived need for police. Police, Malatesta argues through Giorgio, breed criminals, just as he had argued earlier in *Anarchy* that the *louvreterie* (wolf catchers) breed wolves, since without wolves or criminals the survival of the respective bodies of officials would be in jeopardy (London, 1974: 33–34). Social defence, he asserts, is a community responsibility. The fact that this issue was already discussed in Dialogue Eleven is an indication of its importance to Malatesta. In Dialogue Sixteen we meet Pippo, a crippled war veteran, who opens up the questions of nationalism and patriotism. The points Malatesta makes here echo Lenin's call for class solidarity in the face of the divisive and destructive nationalism of the First World War. Giorgio makes it clear that in his view patriotism is simply a device by which the bourgeoisie recruits working class support for the existing property regime, and the territorial ambitions of those who benefit from it. Finally, in Dialogue Seventeen, Luigi, a socialist, enters and a discussion ensues that aims at distinguishing anarchism from both parliamentary and authoritarian socialism, but with the key focus on the inevitable failure of the parliamentary path and of any form of what Eduard Bernstein had called evolutionary socialism. The need for a revolutionary change is underlined.

Work on the dialogues in their present form was completed by October 1920. On 16 October Malatesta was arrested and placed in the prison of San Vittore. There was an extensive police search of his apartments for arms and explosives, but the manuscript of the dialogues remained undiscovered or ignored. They were published as a set, with Fabbri's introduction, in 1922.

These dialogues of Malatesta represent not just a major contribution to anarchist political theory, but a significant historical document. Written over a period of 23 years they are a commentary on turbulent times and vital historical events, covering as they do an epoch distinguished in particular by left-wing agitation and organisation across Europe. During the time spanned by these ruminations on anarchism the world witnessed the Second International, the rise of Bolshevism, the First World War, the birth of Fascism and the Russian Revolutions, both of 1904 and 1917. Without any direct allusion to any of these events the dialogues en-

gage in a lively debate with many of the issues that they raise. In a real sense Malatesta has crafted anarchist theory into a running commentary on his times. It is a work of intelligence, style and real artistry.

Paul Nursey-Bray

ONE

PROSPERO [*A plump member of the bourgeoisie, full of political economy and other sciences*]: But of course... of course... we know all about it. There are people suffering from hunger, women prostituting themselves, children dying from a lack of care. You always say the same thing... in the end you become boring. Allow me to savour my gelati in peace... Certainly, there are a thousand evils in our society, hunger, ignorance, war, crime, plague, terrible mishaps... so what? Why is it your concern?

MICHELE [*A student who keeps company with socialists and anarchists*]: I beg your pardon? Why is it my concern? You have a comfortable home, a well-provisioned table, servants at your command; for you everything is fine. And as long as you and yours are all right, even if the world around you collapses, nothing matters. Really, if you only had a little heart...

PROSPERO: Enough, enough... don't sermonise... Stop raging, young man. You think I am insensible, indifferent to the misfortunes of others. On the contrary, my heart bleeds, (waiter, bring me a cognac and a cigar), my heart bleeds; but the great social problems are not resolved by sentiment. The laws of nature are immutable and neither great speeches, nor mawkish sentimentality can do anything about it. The wise person accepts fate, and gets the best out of life that he can, without running after pointless dreams.

MICHELE: Ah? So we are dealing with natural laws?... And what if the poor got it into their heads to correct these... laws of nature. I have heard speeches hardly supportive of these superior laws.

PROSPERO: Of course, of course. We well know the people with whom you associate. On my behalf, tell those scoundrel socialists and anarchists, who you have chosen to be your preferred company, that for

them, and for those who would try to put in practice their wicked theories, we have good soldiers and excellent *carabinieri*.

MICHELE: Oh! If you are going to bring in the soldiers and the *carabinieri*, I won't talk anymore. It is like proposing a fist fight to demonstrate my opinions are in error. However, don't rely on brute force if you have no other arguments. Tomorrow you may find yourself in the weakest position; what then?

PROSPERO: What then? Well, if that misfortune should come about, there would be great disorder, an explosion of evil passions, massacres, looting... and then it would all return to how it was before. Maybe a few poor people would have become enriched, some rich people would have fallen into poverty, but overall nothing would have changed, because the world cannot change. Bring me, just bring me one of these anarchist agitators of yours and you will see how I will tan his hide. They are good at filling the heads of people like you with tall stories because your heads are empty; but you'll see whether they will be able to maintain their absurdities with me.

MICHELE: All right. I will bring a friend of mine who holds socialist and anarchist principles and I will promote your discussion with him with pleasure. In the meantime discuss matters with me, for while I still don't have well developed opinions, I clearly see that society as it is organized today, is a thing contrary to good sense and decency. Come now, you are so fat and flourishing that a bit of excitement will not do you any harm. It will help your digestion.

PROSPERO: Come on, then; let's have a discussion. But, you ought to know that it would be better if you studied instead of spitting out opinions about matters that are the province of others more learned and wiser. I believe I can give you 20 years?

MICHELE: This does not prove that you have studied more, and if I have to judge you from what you have been saying, I doubt that, even if you have studied a lot, you have gained much from it.

PROSPERO: Young man, young man, really! Let's have some respect.

MICHELE: All right, I respect you. But don't throw my age in my face, as if in fact you were raising an objection to me with the police. Arguments are not old or young, they are good or bad; that's all.

PROSPERO: Well, well, let's get on with what you have to say?

MICHELE: I must say that I cannot understand why the peasants that hoe, sow and harvest have neither sufficient bread, nor wine or meat; why bricklayers that build houses don't have a roof for shelter, why shoemakers have worn shoes. In other words, why is it that those who work, that produce everything, lack basic necessities; while those who don't do anything revel in abundance. I cannot understand why there are people that lack bread, when there is much uncultivated land and a lot of people who would be extremely happy to be able to cultivate it; why are there so many bricklayers out of work while there are lots of people who need houses; why many shoemakers, dressmakers etc... are without work, while the majority of the population lacks shoes, clothes and all the necessities of civil life. Could you please tell me which is the natural law that explains and justifies these absurdities?

PROSPERO: Nothing could be more clear and simple.

To produce, human labour is not enough, you need land, materials, tools, premises, machinery and you also need the means to survive while waiting for the product to be made and delivered to the market: in a word, you need capital. Your peasants, your workers, have only their physical labour; as a consequence they cannot work if such is not the wish of those who own land and capital. And since we are few in number and have enough even if, for a while, we leave our land uncultivated and our capital inoperative, while the workers are many and are always constrained by immediate needs, it follows that they must work whenever and however we wish and on whatever terms that suit us. And when we no longer need their labour and calculate that there is no gain from making them work, they are forced to remain idle even when they have the greatest need for the very things they could produce.

Are you content now? Could I explain it more clearly than this?

MICHELE: Certainly, this is what one calls speaking frankly, there is no question about that.

But, by what right does land belong only to a few? How is it that capital is found in a few hands, specifically in the hands of those who do not work?

PROSPERO: Yes, yes, I know what you are saying to me, and I even know the more or less lame arguments with which others would oppose you; the right of the owners derives from the improvement they bring

to the land, from savings by means of which labour is transformed into capital, etc . But let me be even more frank. Things are as they are as the result of historical facts, the product of hundreds of years of human history. The whole of human existence has been, is, and will always be, a continuous struggle. There are those who have fared well and those who have fared badly. What can I do about it? So much the worse for some, so much the better for others. Woe to the conquered! This is the grand law of nature against which no revolt is possible.

What would you like? Should I deprive myself of all I have so I can rot in poverty, while someone else stuffs themselves on my money?

MICHELE: I do not exactly want that. But I'm thinking: what if the workers profiting from their numbers and basing themselves on your theory that life is a struggle and that rights derive from facts, get the idea into their heads of creating a new "historic fact", by taking away your land and capital and inaugurating new rights?

PROSPERO: Ah! Certainly, that would complicate matters.

But... we shall continue on another occasion. Now I have to go to the theatre.

Good evening to you all.

TWO

AMBROGIO [*Magistrate*]: Listen, Signor Prospero, now that it is just between ourselves, all good conservatives. The other evening when you were talking to that empty head, Michele, I did not want to intervene; but, do you think that was the way to defend our institutions?

It very nearly seemed that you were the anarchist!

PROSPERO: Well, I never! Why is that?

AMBROGIO: Because, what you were saying in essence is that all of the present social organisation is founded on force, thereby providing arguments for those who would like to destroy it with force. But what about the supreme principles which govern civil societies, rights, morality, religion, don't they count for anything?

PROSPERO: Of course, you always have a mouth full of rights. It is a bad habit that comes from your profession.

If tomorrow the governments should decree, let's suppose, collectivism, you would condemn the supporters of private property with the same impassiveness with which today you condemn the anarchists... and always in the name of the supreme principles of eternal and immutable rights!

You see, it is only a question of names. You say rights, I say force; but, then, what really counts are the blessed *carabinieri*, and whoever has them on their side is right.

AMBROGIO: Come, now, Signor Prospero! It seems impossible that your love of sophism must always stifle your conservative instincts.

You don't understand how many bad effects follow from the sight of a person such as yourself, one of the elders of the town, providing arguments for the worst enemies of order.

Believe me we should stop this bad habit of squabbling among ourselves, at least in public; let's all unite to defend our institutions which because of the wickedness of the times are receiving some brutal blows... and to look after our endangered interests.

PROSPERO: Let's unite, by all means; but if some strong measures are not taken, if you don't stop using liberal doctrines we will not resolve anything.

AMBROGIO: Oh! Yes, certainly. We need severe laws to be strictly applied.

But it is not enough. Force alone cannot keep a people subjected for long, particularly in this day and age. It is necessary to oppose propaganda with propaganda, there is a need to persuade people that we are right.

PROSPERO: You really are kidding yourself! My poor friend, in our common interest, I beg you, be careful of propaganda. It is subversive stuff even if it is carried out by conservatives; and your propaganda would always turn to the advantage of socialists, anarchists or whatever else they call themselves.

Go and persuade someone that is hungry that it is just that they don't eat, the more so when it is they who produce the food! So long as they don't think about it and continue to bless God and the boss for what little they receive, it's all right. But, from the moment they start to reflect on their position it's over: they will become an enemy with whom you will

never be reconciled. Not on your life! We must avoid propaganda at all cost, stifle the printing press, with or without or perhaps, even against the law.

AMBROGIO: That's right, that's right.

PROSPERO: Prevent all meetings, dismantle all associations, send to jail all those who think...

CESARE [*shopkeeper*]: Easy, easy, don't let passion sweep you away. Remember that other governments, in more favourable times, adopted the measures that you are suggesting... and it precipitated their own downfall.

AMBROGIO: Hush, hush! Here comes Michele with an anarchist whom I sentenced last year to six months jail for a subversive manifesto. Actually, between ourselves, the manifesto was done in such a way that the law couldn't touch it, but, what can you do? The criminal intention was there... and, after all, society must be defended!

MICHELE: Good evening, Gentlemen. May I introduce to you an anarchist friend of mine who has accepted the challenge thrown down the other evening by Signor Prospero.

PROSPERO: But, what challenge, what challenge?! We were only having a discussion among friends to pass the time.
However, you were explaining to us what anarchism is, which is something we have never been able to understand.

GIORGIO [*Anarchist*]: I am not a teacher of anarchism and I have not come to give a course on the subject; but I can, when needed, defend my ideas. Besides, there is a gentleman here (referring to the magistrate, Ambrogio, in an ironic tone) who ought to know more about it than I. He has condemned many people for anarchism; and since he is for a certainty a man of conscience, he would not have done so without first of all making a profound study of the arguments involved.

CESARE: Come, come, let's not get personal... and since we must speak of anarchism, let's start on the subject immediately.
You see, I also recognise that things are going badly and that remedies need to be found. But we don't need to become utopian, and above all we must avoid violence. Certainly, the government should take the workers'

cause more to heart: it should provide work for the unemployed; protect the national industries, encourage commerce. But...

GIORGIO: How many things you would like this poor government to do! But the government does not want to become concerned for the interests of the workers, and it's understandable.

CESARE: How can it be understandable? Up to now, really, the government has shown a lack of capacity and perhaps little desire to remedy the ills of the country; but, tomorrow, enlightened and conscientious ministers might do what hasn't been done up to now.

GIORGIO: No, my dear sir, it is not a question of one ministry or another. It is a question of government in general; of all governments, those of today, like those of yesterday, and those of tomorrow. The government emanates from proprietors, it needs the support of proprietors to sustain itself, its members are themselves proprietors; how can it therefore serve the interest of workers?

On the other hand the government, even if it wanted to, could not resolve the social question because this is the product of general factors, that cannot be removed by a government and which in fact themselves determine the nature and the direction of government. In order to resolve the social question we must radically change the whole system which the government has the appointed mission of defending.

You talk about giving work to the unemployed. But, what can the government do if there is no work? Must it make people do useless work, and then who would pay them? Should it gear production to provide for the unsatisfied needs of the people? But, then, the proprietors would find themselves unable to sell the products which they expropriate from workers, as a matter of fact they would have to cease to be proprietors, since, the government in order to provide work for the people would take away from them the land and the capital which they have monopolised.

This would be social revolution, the liquidation of all of the past, and you well know that if this is not carried out by the workers, peasants and the underprivileged, the government will certainly never do it.

Protect industry and commerce you say: but the government is able, at the most, to favour one industrial class to the detriment of another, to favour the traders of one region at the expense of those of another, and so, in total, nothing would be gained, only a bit of favouritism, a bit of injustice and more unproductive expenditure. As far as a government which protects all, it is an absurd idea because governments do not pro-

duce anything and therefore can only transfer the wealth produced by others.

CESARE: But what then? If the government does not want, and is not able, to do anything, what remedy is there? Even if you make the revolution you will need to create another government; and since you say that all governments are the same, after the revolution everything will be the same as before.

GIORGIO: You would be right if our revolution produced simply a change of government. But we want the complete transformation of the property regime, of the system of production and exchange; and as far as the government is concerned, a useless, harmful and parasitic organ, we don't want one at all. We believe that while there is a government, in other words a body superimposed on society, and provided with the means to impose forcibly its own will, there will not be real emancipation, there will be no peace among people.
You know that I am an anarchist and anarchy means society without government.

CESARE: But what do you mean? A society without government! How would you be able to live? Who would make the law? Who would execute it?

GIORGIO: I see that you don't have any idea of what we want. In order to avoid time wasting digressions you must allow me to explain, briefly, but methodically, our programme; and then we can discuss matters to our mutual benefit.
But now it is late; we will continue next time.

THREE

CESARE: So tonight you will explain how we can live without government?

GIORGIO: I will do my best. But, first of all we must give some consideration to how things are in society as it is and whether it is really necessary to change its composition.

Looking at the society in which we live, the first phenomena that strike us are the poverty that afflicts the masses, the uncertainty of tomorrow which, more or less, weighs on everybody, the relentless struggle of everybody fighting everybody in order to conquer hunger...

AMBROGIO: But, my dear sir, you could go on talking for some time about these social evils; unfortunately, there are plenty of examples available. But, this does not serve any purpose, and it doesn't demonstrate that we would be better off by making everything topsy-turvy. It's not only poverty that afflicts humanity; there are also plagues, cholera, earthquakes... and it would be odd if you wished to direct the revolution against these scourges.

Evil is in the nature of things...

GIORGIO: But in fact I want to demonstrate to you that poverty depends on the present mode of social organisation, and that in a more egalitarian and rationally organised society it must disappear.

When we do not know the causes of an evil and we don't have solutions, well, there is not much we can do about it; but as soon as the solution is found, it becomes everybody's concern and duty to put it into practice.

AMBROGIO: Here is your mistake: poverty results from causes superior to human will and human law. Poverty results from the meanness of nature which does not supply sufficient products to meet human desires.

Have a look at animals, where you cannot blame *capitalist infamy* nor *tyrannical government*; they must fight for food and often die of hunger.

When the cupboard's bare, the cupboard's bare. The truth is that there are too many people in the world. If people were able to control themselves and did not have children unless they could maintain them... Have you read Malthus?

GIORGIO: Yes, a little; but it's all the same if I hadn't read his work. What I know, without needing to read any part of it, is that you must have some nerve, I must say to maintain such things!

Poverty results from meanness of nature, you say, even though you are aware that there is uncultivated land...

AMBROGIO: If there is uncultivated land it means that it cannot be cultivated, that it cannot produce enough to pay for the costs involved.

GIORGIO: You believe that?

Try on experiment and give it to the peasants and you will see what gardens they'll create. But, you are not serious? Why, much of this land was cultivated in times when the art of agriculture was in its infancy and chemistry and agricultural technology hardly existed! Don't you know that today even stones can be transformed into fertile land? Don't you know that agronomists, even the less visionary ones, have calculated that a territory like Italy, if rationally cultivated could easily maintain in plenty a population of one hundred million?

The real reason why land is left uncultivated, and why cultivated land produces only a small proportion of its full potential, given the adoption of less primitive methods of cultivation, is because the proprietors do not have any interest in increasing its production.

They are not bothered about the welfare of the people; they produce in order to sell, and they know that when there is a lot of goods the prices are reduced and profit decreases and may end up being, in total, less than when goods are scarce and can be sold at prices which suit them.

Not that this only happens in relation to agricultural products. In every branch of human activity it is the same. For instance: in every city the poor are forced to live in infected hovels, crowded together without any regard for hygiene or morals, in conditions in which it is impossible to keep clean and achieve a human existence. Why does this happen? Perhaps because there are no houses? But why aren't sound, comfortable and beautiful houses built for everybody?

The stones, bricks, lime, steel, timber, all the materials needed for construction exist in abundance; as do the unemployed bricklayers, carpenters, and architects who ask for nothing more than to work; why, then, is there so much idle capacity when it could be utilised to everybody's advantage.

The reason is simple, and it is that, if there were a lot of houses, the rents would go down. The proprietors of the houses already built, who are the same people who have the means to build others, don't really have any desire to see their rents decrease just to win the approval of the poor.

CESARE: There is some truth in what you are saying; but you are deceiving yourself about the explanation for the painful things that are afflicting our country.

The cause of the land being badly cultivated or left idle, of business running aground, and of poverty in general is the lack of élan in the bourgeoisie. Capitalists are either fearful or ignorant, and don't want or don't know how to develop industries; the landowners don't know how

to break with their grandfathers' methods and don't want to be bothered; traders don't know how to find new outlets and the government with its fiscal policy and its stupid customs policy instead of encouraging private initiatives, obstructs and suffocates them in their infancy. Have a look at France, England and Germany.

GIORGIO: That our bourgeoisie is indolent and ignorant I don't doubt, but its inferiority only supplies the explanation for why it is beaten by the bourgeoisie of other countries in the struggle to conquer the world market: it does not in any way supply the reason for people's poverty. And the clear evidence is that poverty, the lack of work and all the rest of the social evils exist in countries where the bourgeoisie is more active and more intelligent, as much as they do in Italy; actually, those evils are generally more intense in countries where industry is more developed, unless the workers have been able, through organisation, resistance or rebellion, to acquire better living conditions.

Capitalism is the same everywhere. In order to survive and prosper it needs a permanent situation of partial scarcity: it needs it to maintain its prices and to create hungry masses to work under any conditions.

You see, in fact, when production is in full swing in a country it is never to give producers the means to increase consumption, but always for sales to an external market. If the domestic consumption increases it occurs only when the workers have been able to profit from these circumstances to demand an increase in their wages and as a consequence have been enabled to buy more goods. But then, when for one reason or another the external market for which they produce does not buy anymore, crisis comes, work stops, wages decline and dire poverty begins to cause havoc again. And yet, in this same country where the great majority lacks everything, it would be so much more reasonable to work for their own consumption! But, then, what would the capitalists gain out of that!

AMBROGIO: So, you think it is all the fault of capitalism?

GIORGIO: Yes of course; or more generally it's due to the fact that a few individuals have hoarded the land and all the instruments of production and can impose their will on the workers, in such a fashion that instead of producing to satisfy people's needs and with these needs in view, production is geared towards making a profit for the employers.

All the justifications you think up to preserve bourgeois privileges are completely erroneous, or so many lies. A little while ago you were saying that the cause of poverty is the scarcity of products. On another occasion,

confronting the problems of the unemployed, you would have said that the warehouses are full, that the goods cannot be sold, and that the proprietors cannot create employment in order to throw goods away.

In fact this typifies the absurdity of the system: we die of hunger because the warehouses are full and there is no need to cultivate land, or rather, the landowners don't need their land cultivated; shoemakers don't work and thus walk about in worn out shoes because there are too many shoes... and so it goes...

AMBROGIO: So it is the capitalists who should die of hunger?

GIORGIO: Oh! Certainly not. They should simply work like everybody else. It might seem harsh to you, but you don't understand: when one eats well work is no longer threatening.' I can show you in fact you that it is a need and a fulfilment of human nature. But be fair, tomorrow I have to go to work and it is already very late.

Until next time.

FOUR

CESARE: I like arguing with you. You have a certain way of putting things that makes you appear correct... and, indeed, I am not saying that you are completely in the wrong.

There are certainly some absurdities, real or apparent, in the present social order. For example, I find it difficult to understand the customs policy. While here people are dying of hunger or associated diseases because they lack sufficient bread of good quality, the government makes it difficult to import grain from America, where they have more than they need and would like nothing better than to sell it to us. It's like being hungry but not Wishing to eat!

However...

GIORGIO: Yes indeed, but the government is not hungry; and neither are the large wheat growers of Italy, in whose interests the government places the duty on wheat. If those who are hungry were free to act, you would see that they would not reject the wheat!

CESARE: I know that and I understand that with these sorts of arguments you make the common people, who only see things in broad terms and from one point of view, disaffected. But in order to avoid mistakes we must look at all sides of the question, as I was on the point of doing when you interrupted me.

It is true that the proprietors' interests greatly influence the imposition of an import tax. But on the other hand, if there was open entry, the Americans, who can produce wheat and meat in more favourable conditions than ours, would end up supplying the whole of our market: and what would our farmers do then? The proprietors would be ruined, but the workers would fare even worse. Bread would sell for small amounts of money. But if there was no way of earning that money you would still die of hunger. And, then the Americans, whether the goods are dear or cheap, want to get paid, and if in Italy we don't produce, with what are we going to pay?

You could say to me that in Italy we could cultivate those products suited to our soil and climate and then exchange them abroad: wine for instance, oranges, flowers and the like. But what if the things that we are capable of producing on favourable terms are not wanted by others, either because they have no use for them or because they produce them themselves? Not to mention that to change the production regime you need capital, knowledge and above all time: what would we eat in the meantime?

GIORGIO: Perfect! You have put your finger on it. Free trade cannot solve the question of poverty any more than protectionism. Free trade is good for consumers and harms the producers, and vice versa, protectionism is good for the protected producers but does harm to consumers; and since workers are at the same time both consumers and producers, in the end it is always the same thing.

And it will always be the same until the capitalist system is abolished.

If workers worked for themselves, and not for the owner's profits, then each country would be able to produce sufficient for its own needs, and they would only have to come to an agreement with other countries to distribute productive work according to the soil quality, climate, the availability of resources, the inclinations of the inhabitants etc. in order that all men should enjoy the best of everything with the minimum possible effort.

CESARE: Yes, but these are only pipe dreams.

GIORGIO: They may be dreams today; but when the people have understood how they could improve life, the dream would soon be transformed into reality. The only stumbling blocks are the egoism of some and the ignorance of others.

CESARE: There are other obstacles, my friend. You think that once the proprietors are thrown out you would wallow in gold...

GIORGIO: That is not what I'm saying. On the contrary, I think that to overcome this condition of scarcity in which capitalism maintains us, and to organise production largely to satisfy the needs of all, you need to do a lot of work; but it is not even the willingness to work that people lack, it is the possibility. We are complaining about the present system not so much because we have to maintain some idlers: even though this certainly does not please us — but, because it is these idlers that regulate work and prevent us from working in good conditions and producing an abundance for all.

CESARE: You exaggerate. It is true that often proprietors don't employ people in order to speculate on the scarcity of products, but more often it is because they themselves lack capital.

Land and raw materials are not enough for production. You need, as you know, tools, machinery, premises, the means to pay the workers while they work, in a word, capital; and this only accumulates slowly. How many ventures fail to get off the ground, or, having got off the ground, fail due to a shortage of capital! Can you imagine the effect then if, as you desire, a social revolution came about? With the destruction of capital, and the great disorder that would follow it, a general impoverishment would result.

GIORGIO: This is another error, or another lie from the defenders of the present order: the shortage of capital.

Capital may be lacking in this or that undertaking because it has been cornered by others; but if we take society as a whole, you'll find that there is a great quantity of inactive capital, just as there is a great quantity of uncultivated land.

Don't you see how many machines are rusting, how many factories remain closed, how many houses there are without tenants.

There is a need for food to nourish workers while they work; but really workers must eat even if they are unemployed. They eat little and badly, but they remain alive and are ready to work as soon as an employer has need of them. So, it is not because there is a lack of the means of sub-

sistence that workers don't work; and if they could work on their own account, they would adapt themselves, where it was really necessary, to work while living just as they do when they are unemployed, because they would know that with this temporary sacrifice they could then finally escape from the social condition of poverty and subjection.

Imagine, and this is something that has been witnessed many times, that an earthquake destroys a city ruining an entire district. In a little time the city is reconstructed in a form more beautiful than before and not a trace of the disaster remains. Because in such a case it is in the interests of proprietors and capitalists to employ people, the means are quickly found, and in the blink of an eye an entire city is reconstructed, where before they had continually asserted that they lacked the means to build a few "workers' houses".

As far as the destruction of capital that would take place at the time of the revolution, it is to be hoped that as part of a conscious movement that has as its aim the common ownership of social wealth, the people would not want to destroy what is to become their own. In any case it would not be as bad as an earthquake!

No — there will certainly be difficulties before things work out for the best; but, I can only see two serious obstacles, which must be overcome before we can begin: people's lack of consciousness and... the *carabinieri*.

AMBROGIO: But, tell me a little more; you talk of capital, work, production, consumption etc.; but you never talk of rights, justice, morals and religion?

The issues of how to best utilise land and capital are very important; but more important still are the moral questions. I also would like everybody to live well, but if in order to reach this utopia we have to violate moral laws, if we have to repudiate the eternal principles of right, upon which every civil society should be founded, then I would infinitely prefer that the sufferings of today went on forever!

And then, just think that there must also be a supreme will that regulates the world. The world did not come into being on its own and there must be *something beyond it* — I am not saying God, Paradise, Hell, because you would be quite capable of not believing in them — there must be *something beyond* this world that explains everything and where one finds compensation for the apparent injustices down here.

Do you think you can violate this pre-established harmony of the universe? You are not able to do so. We cannot do other than yield to it.

For once stop inciting the masses, stop giving rise to fanciful hopes in the souls of the least fortunate, stop blowing on the fire that is unfortunately smouldering beneath the ashes.

Would you, or other modern barbarians, wish to destroy in a terrible social cataclysm the civilization that is the glory of our ancestors and ourselves? If you want to do something worthwhile, if you want to relieve as much as possible the suffering of the poor, tell them to resign themselves to their fate, because true happiness lies in being contented. After all, everyone carries their own cross; every class has its own tribulations and duties, and it is not always those who live among riches that are the most happy.

GIORGIO: Come, my dear magistrate, leave aside the declarations about "grand principles" and the conventional indignation; we are not in court here, and, for the moment, you do not have to pronounce any sentence on me.

How would one guess, from hearing you talk, that you are not one of the underprivileged! And how useful is the resignation of the poor... for those who live off them.

First of all, I beg you, leave aside the transcendental and religious arguments, in which even you don't believe. Of mysteries of the Universe I know nothing, and you know no more; so it is pointless to bring them into the discussion. For the rest, be aware that the belief in a supreme maker, in God the creator and father of humanity would not be a secure weapon for you. If the priests, who have always been and remain in the service of the wealthy, deduce from it that it is the duty of the poor to resign themselves to their fate, others can deduce (and in the course of history have so deduced) the right to justice and equality. If God is our common father then we are all related. God cannot want some of his children to exploit and martyr the others; and the rich, the rulers, would be so many Cains cursed by the Father.

But, let's drop it.

AMBROGIO : Well then, let's forget about religion if you wish since so much of it would be pointless to you. But you would acknowledge rights, morals, a superior justice!

GIORGIO: Listen: if it is true that rights, justice and morals may require and sanction oppression and unhappiness even of only one human being, I would immediately say to you, that rights, justice and morals are only lies, infamous weapons forged to defend the privileged; and such they are when they mean what you mean by them.

Rights, justice, morals should aim at the maximum possible good for all, or else they are synonyms for arrogant behaviour and injustice. And, it is certainly true that this conception of them answers to the neces-

sities of existence and the development of human social cooperation, that has formed and persisted in the human conscience and continually gains in strength, in spite of all the opposition from those who up to now have dominated the world. You yourself could not defend, other than with pitiful sophism, the present social institutions with your interpretation of abstract principles of morality and justice.

AMBROGIO: You really are very presumptuous. It is not enough to deny, as it seems to me you do, the right to property, but you maintain that we are incapable of defending it with our own principles...

Giorgio: Yes, precisely. If you wish I will demonstrate it to you next time.

FIVE

GIORGIO: Well then, my dear magistrate, if I am not mistaken, we were talking about the right to property.

AMBROGIO: Indeed. I am really curious to hear how you would defend, in the name of justice and morals, your proposals for despoliation and robbery.
A society in which no-one is secure in their possessions would no longer be a society, but a horde of wild beasts ready to devour each other.

GIORGIO: Doesn't it seem to you that this is precisely the case with today's society?
You are accusing us of despoliation and robbery; but on the contrary, isn't it the proprietors who continually despoil the workers and rob them of the fruits of their labour?

AMBROGIO: Proprietors use their goods in ways they believe for the best, and they have the right to do so, in the same way the workers freely dispose of their labour. Owners and workers contract freely for the price of work, and when the contract is respected no one can complain.
Charity can relieve acute troubles, unmerited troubles, but rights must remain untouchable.

GIORGIO: But you are speaking of a free contract! The worker who does not work cannot eat, and his liberty resembles that of a traveller, assaulted by thieves, who gives up his purse for fear of losing his life.

AMBROGIO: All right; but you cannot use this to negate the right of each person to dispose of their property as they see fit.

GIORGIO: Their property, their property! But doesn't this come about because the landowners are able to claim that the land and its produce as theirs and the capitalists are able to claim as theirs the instruments of labour and other capital created by human activity?

AMBROGIO: The law recognizes their right to it.

GIORGIO: Ah! If it is only the law, then even a street assassin could claim the right to assassinate and to rob: he would only have to formulate a few articles of law that recognized these rights. On the other hand, this is precisely what the dominant class has accomplished: it has created laws to legitimize the usurpations that it has already perpetrated, and has made them a means of new appropriations.
If all your "supreme principles" are based on the codes of law, it will be enough if tomorrow there is a law decreeing the abolition of private property, and that which today you call robbery and despoliation would instantly become "supreme principle".

AMBROGIO: Oh! But the law must be just! It must conform to the principles of rights and morality, and should not be the result of unbridled whims, or else...

GIORGIO: So, it's not the law that creates rights, but rights which justify law. Then by what right does all the existing wealth, both natural wealth, and that created by the work of humanity belong to a few individuals and gives them the right of life and death over the masses of the underprivileged?

AMBROGIO: It is the right that every person has, and must have, to dispose freely of the product of their activity. It is natural to humanity, without it civilisation would not have been possible.

GIORGIO: Well, I never! Here we now have a defender of the rights of labour. Bravo, really! But tell me, how come those who work are those

who have nothing, while property actually belongs to those who don't work?

Doesn't it occur to you that the logical outcome of your theory is that the present proprietors are the thieves and that, in justice, we need to expropriate them in order to give the wealth which they have usurped to its legitimate owners, the workers?

AMBROGIO: If there are some proprietors who do not work it is because they were the first to work, they or their ancestors, and had the merit to save and the genius to make their savings bear fruit.

GIORGIO: Indeed, can you imagine a worker, who as a rule, earns scarcely enough to keep himself alive, saving and putting together some wealth!

You know very well that the origin of property is violence, robbery and theft, legal or illegal. But, let's assume if you like that someone has made some economies of production in his work, his own personal work: if he wants to enjoy them later on, when and how he wishes, that is fine. But this view of things changes completely however when the process begins of making his savings, what you call, *bear fruit*. This means making others work and stealing from them a part of what they produce; it means hoarding some goods and selling them at a price higher than their cost; it means the artificial creation of scarcity in order to speculate upon it; it means taking away from others their livelihood derived from working freely in order to force them to work for poor wages; and many other similar things which do not correspond to a sense of justice and demonstrate that property, when it does not derive from straightforward and open robbery, derives from the work of others, which proprietors have, in one way or another, turned to their own advantage.

Does it seem just to you that a person who has, (let us concede), by their work and their genius put together a little capital, can because of this rob others of the products of their work, and furthermore bequeath to all the generations of his descendants the right to live in idleness on the back of workers?

Does it seem just to you that, because there have been a few laborious and thrifty men — I say this to bring out your position — that have accumulated some capital, the great mass of humanity must be condemned to perpetual poverty and brutalisation?

And, on the other hand, even if someone had worked for themselves, with their muscles and their brains without exploiting anybody; even if, against all the odds, such a one had been able to produce much more than they needed without the direct or indirect cooperation of the so-

ciety as a whole, it does not mean because of this that they should be authorised to do harm to others, to take away from others the means of existence. If someone built a road along the shore they could not, because of this, argue for a right to deny the access of others to the sea. If someone could till and cultivate on their own all the soil of a province, they could not presume because of this to starve all the inhabitants of that province. If someone had created some new and powerful means of production, they would not have the right to use their invention in such a way as to subject people to their rule and even less of bequeathing to the countless successions of their descendants the right to dominate and exploit future generations.

But I am losing my way to suppose for a moment that proprietors are workers or the descendants of workers! Would you like me to tell you the origin of the wealth of all the gentlemen in our community, both of noblemen of ancient stock as well as the *nouveaux riches*?

AMBROGIO: No, no, in charity, let's leave aside personal matters.

If there are some riches acquired by doubtful means this does not provide a reason to deny the right to property. The past is the past, and it's not useful to dig up old problems again.

GIORGIO: We'll leave them buried if that's what you want. As far as I am concerned it is not important. Individual property should be abolished, not so much because it has been acquired by more or less questionable means, as much as because it grants the right and means to exploit the work of others, and its development will always end up making the great mass of people dependent on a few.

But, by the way, how can you justify individual landed property with your theory of savings? You can't tell me that this was produced from the work of the proprietors or of their ancestors?

AMBROGIO: You see. Uncultivated, sterile land has no value. People occupy it, reclaim it, make it yield, and naturally have a right to its crops, which wouldn't have been produced without their work on the land.

GIORGIO: All right: this is the right of the worker to the fruits of his own labour; but this right ceases when he ceases to cultivate the land. Don't you think so?

Now, how is it that the present proprietors possess territories, often immense, that they do not work, have never worked and most frequently do not allow others to work?

How is it that lands that have never been cultivated are privately owned? What is the work, what is the improvement which may have given a date of origin, in this case, to property rights?

The truth is that for the land, even more for the rest, the origin of private property, is violence. And you cannot successfully justify it, if you don't accept the principle that right equals force, and in that case... heaven help you if one day you become the most enfeebled.

AMBROGIO: But in short, you lose sight of social utility, the inherent necessity of civil society. Without the right to property there would be no security, no more orderly work and society would dissolve in chaos.

GIORGIO: What! Now you talk of social utility? But when, in our earlier conversations I only concerned myself with the damage produced by private property, you called me back to arguments about abstract rights!

Enough for this evening. Excuse me but I have to go. We'll go into it another time.

SIX

GIORGIO: Well, have you heard what has happened. Someone told a newspaper about the conversation that we had last time, and for having published it, the newspaper has been gagged.

AMBROGIO: Ah!

GIORGIO: Of course, it goes without saying you don't know anything...! I don't understand how you can claim to be so confident of your ideas when you are so afraid of the public hearing some discussion of them. The paper faithfully reported both your arguments and mine. You ought to be happy that the public is able to appreciate the rational basis upon which the present social constitution rests, and does justice to the futile criticisms of its adversaries. Instead you shut people up, you silence them.

AMBROGIO: I am not involved at all; I belong to the judicial magistracy and not to the public ministry.

GIORGIO: Yes, I know! But, you are colleagues all the same and the same spirit animates you all.

If my chatter annoys you, tell me... and I will go and chatter somewhere else.

AMBROGIO: No, no, on the contrary — I confess that I am interested. Let's continue; as regards the restraining order I will, if you like, put in a good word with the Public Prosecutor. After all, with the law as it is, no one is denied the right to discussion.

GIORGIO: Let's continue, then. Last time, if I remember rightly, in defending the right to property you took as the present basis positive law, in other words the civil code, then a sense of justice, then social utility. Permit me to sum up, in a few words, my ideas with respect to all this.

From my point of view individual property is unjust and immoral because it is founded either on open violence, on fraud, or on the legal exploitation of the labour of others; and it is harmful because it hinders production and prevents the needs of all being satisfied by what can be obtained from land and labour, because it creates poverty for the masses and generates hatred, crimes and most of the evils that afflict modern society.

For these reasons I would like to abolish it and substitute a property regime based on common ownership, in which all people, contributing their just amount of labour, will receive the maximum possible level of wellbeing.

AMBROGIO: Really, I can't see with what logic you have arrived at common property. You have fought against property because, according to you, it derives from violence and from the exploitation of the labour of others; you have said that capitalists regulate production with an eye to their profits and not the better to satisfy to the public need with the least possible effort of the workers; you have denied the right to obtain revenue from land which one has not cultivated oneself, to derive a profit from one's own money or to obtain interest by investing in the construction of houses and in other industries; but you have, however, recognised the right of workers to the products of their own labour, actually you have championed it. As a consequence, according to strict logic, on these criteria you can challenge the verification of the titles to property, and demand the abolition of interest on money and private income; you may even ask for the liquidation of the present society and the division of land and the instruments of labour among those who wish

to use them... but you cannot talk of communism. Individual ownership of the products of one's labour must always exist; and, if you want your emancipated worker to have that security in the future without which no work will be done which does not produce an immediate profit, you must recognise individual ownership of the land and the instruments of production to the extent they are used.

GIORGIO: Excellent, please continue; we could say that even you are tarred with the pitch of socialism. You are of a socialist school different from mine, but it is still socialism. A socialist magistrate is an interesting phenomenon.

AMBROGIO: No, no, I'm no socialist. I was only demonstrating your contradictions and showing you that logically you should be a *mutualist* and not a communist, a supporter of the division of property.

And then I would have to say to you that the division of property into small portions would render any large enterprise impossible and result in general poverty.

GIORGIO: But I am not a mutualist, a partisan of the division of property, nor is, as far as I know, any other modern socialist.

I don't think that dividing property would be worse than leaving it whole in the hands of the capitalists; but I know that this division, where possible, would cause grave damage to production. Above all it could not survive and would lead, again to the formation of great fortunes, and to the proletarianisation of the masses and, in the bitter end, to poverty and exploitation.

I say that *the worker has the right to the entire product of his work*: but I recognise that this right is only a formula of abstract justice; and means, in practice, that there should be no exploitation, that everyone must work and enjoy the fruits of their labour, according to the custom agreed among them.

Workers are not isolated beings that live by themselves and for themselves, but social beings that live in a continuous exchange of services with other workers, and they must coordinate their rights with those of the others. Moreover it is impossible, the more so with modern production methods, to determine the exact labour that each worker contributed, just as it is impossible to determine the differences in productivity of each worker or each group of workers, how much is due to the fertility of the soil, the quality of the implements used, the advantages or difficulties flowing from the geographical situation or the social environment. Hence, the solution cannot be found in respect to the strict

rights of each person, but must be sought in fraternal agreement, in solidarity.

AMBROGIO: But, then, there is no more liberty.

GIORGIO: On the contrary, it is only then that there will be liberty. You, so called liberals, call liberty the theoretical, abstract right to do something; and you would be capable of saying without smiling, or blushing, that a person who died of hunger because they were not able to procure food for themselves, was free to eat. We, on the contrary, call liberty the possibility of doing something — and this liberty, the only true one, becomes greater as the agreement among men and the support they give each other grows.

AMBROGIO: You said that if property were to be divided, the great fortunes would soon be restored and there would be a return to the original situation. Why is this?

GIORGIO: Because, at the beginning it would be an impossible goal to make everyone perfectly equal. There are different sorts of land, some produce a lot with little work and others a little with a lot of work; there are all sorts of advantages and disadvantages offered by different localities; there are also great differences in physical and intellectual strength between one person and another. Now, from these divisions rivalry and struggle would naturally arise: the best land, the best implements and the best sites would go to the strongest, the most intelligent or the most cunning. Hence, the best material means being in the hands of the most gifted people, they would quickly find themselves in the position superior to others, and starting from these early advantages, would easily grow in strength, thus commencing a new process of exploitation and expropriation of the weak, which would lead to the re-constitution of a bourgeois society.

AMBROGIO: So, really seriously, you are a communist? You want laws that would declare the share of each individual to be non-transferable and would surround the weak with serious legal guarantees.

GIORGIO: Oh! You always think that one can remedy anything with laws. You are not a magistrate for nothing. Laws are made and unmade to please the strongest.

Those who are a little stronger than the average violate them; those who are very much stronger repeal them, and make others to suit their interests.

AMBROGIO: And, so?

GIORGIO: Well then, I've already told you, it is necessary to substitute agreement and solidarity for struggle among people, and to achieve this it is necessary first of all to abolish individual property.

AMBROGIO: But there would be no problems with all the goodies available. Everything belongs to everybody, whoever wants to can work and who doesn't can make love; eat, drink, be merry! Oh, what a Land of Plenty! What a good life! What a beautiful madhouse! Ha! Ha! Ha!

GIORGIO: Considering the figure you are cutting by wanting to make a rational defence of a society that maintains itself by brute force, I don't really think that you have much to laugh about!
Yes my good sir, I am a communist. But you seem to have some strange notions of communism. Next time I will try and make you understand. For now, good evening.

SEVEN

AMBROGIO: Well, then, would you like to explain to me what this communism of yours is all about.

GIORGIO : With pleasure.
Communism is a method of social organisation in which people, instead of fighting among themselves to monopolise natural advantages and alternatively exploiting and oppressing each other, as happens in today's society, would associate and agree to cooperate in the best interest of all. Starting from the principle that the land, the mines and all natural forces belong to everybody, and that all the accumulated wealth and acquisitions of previous generations also belongs to everybody, people, in communism, would want to work cooperatively, to produce all that is necessary.

AMBROGIO: I understand. You want, as was stated in a news-sheet that came to hand during an anarchist trial, *for each person to produce according to their ability and consume according to their needs*; or, *for each to give what they can and take what they need*. Isn't that so?

GIORGIO: In fact these are principles that we frequently repeat; but for them to represent correctly our conception of what a communist society would be like it is necessary to understand what is meant. It is not, obviously, about on absolute right to satisfy *all* of one's needs, because needs are infinite, growing more rapidly than the means to satisfy them, and so their satisfaction is always limited by productive capacity; nor would it be useful or just that the community in order to satisfy excessive needs, otherwise called caprices, of a few individuals, should undertake work, out of proportion to the utility being produced. Nor are we talking about employing *all* of one's strength in producing things, because taken literally, this would mean working until one is exhausted, which would mean that by maximising the satisfaction of human needs we destroy humanity.

What we would like is for everybody to live in the best possible way: so that everybody with a minimum amount of effort will obtain maximum satisfaction. I don't know how to give you a theoretical formula which correctly depicts such a slate of affairs; but when we get rid of the social environment of the boss and the police, and people consider each other as family, and think of helping instead of exploiting one another, the practical formula for social life will soon be found. In any case, we will make the most of what we know and what we can do, providing for piece-by-piece modifications as we learn to do things better.

AMBROGIO: I understand: you are a partisan of the *prise au tas*, as your comrades from France would say, that is to say each person produces what he likes and *throws in the heap*, or, if you prefer, brings to the communal warehouse what he has produced; and each *takes from the heap* ever he likes and whatever he needs. Isn't that so?

GIORGIO: I notice that you decided to inform yourself a little about this issue, and I guess that you have read the trial documents more carefully than you normally do when you send us to jail. If all magistrates and policemen did this, the things that they steal from us during the searches would at least be useful for something!

But, let's return to our discussion. Even this formula of *take from the heap* is only a form of words, that expresses an inclination to substitute for the market spirit of today the spirit of fraternity and solidarity, but it

doesn't indicate with any certainty a definite method of social organisation. Perhaps you could find among us some who take that formula literally, because they suppose that work undertaken spontaneously would always be abundant and that products would accumulate in such quantity and variety that rules about work or consumption would be pointless. But I don't think like that: I believe, as I've told you, that humans always have more needs than the means to satisfy them and I am glad of it because this is a spur to progress; and I think that, even if we could, it would be an absurd waste of energy to produce blindly to provide for all possible needs, rather than calculating the actual needs and organising to satisfy them with as little effort as possible. So, once again, the solution lies in accord between people and in the agreements, expressed or silent, that will come about when they have achieved equality of conditions and are inspired by a feeling of solidarity.

Try to enter into the spirit of our programme, and don't worry overmuch about formulas that, in our party just like any other, are not pithy and striking but are always a vague and inexact way of expressing a broad direction.

AMBROGIO: But don't you realise that communism is the negation of liberty, and of human personality? Perhaps, it may have existed in the beginning of humanity, when human beings, scarcely developed intellectually and morally, were happy when they could satisfy their material appetites as members of the horde. Perhaps it is possible in a religious society, or a monastic order, that seeks the suppression of human passion, and prides itself on the incorporation of the individual into the religious community and claims obedience to be a prime duty. But in a modern society, in which there is a great flowering of civilization produced by the free activity of individuals, with the need for independence and liberty that torments and ennobles modern man, communism is not an impossible dream, it is a return to barbarism. Every activity would be paralysed; every promising contest where one could distinguish oneself, assert one's own individuality, extinguished...

GIORGIO: And so on, and so on.

Come on. Don't waste your eloquence. These are well-known stock phrases... and are no more than a lot of brazen and irresponsible lies. Liberty, individuality of those who die of hunger! What crude irony! What profound hypocrisy!

You defend a society in which the great majority lives in bestial conditions, a society in which workers die of privation and of hunger, in which children die by the thousands and millions for lack of care, in

which women prostitute themselves because of hunger, in which ignorance clouds the mind, in which even those who are educated must sell their talent and lie in order to eat, in which nobody is sure of tomorrow — and you dare talk of liberty and individuality?

Perhaps, liberty and the possibility of developing one's own individuality exist for you, for a small caste of privileged people... and perhaps not even for them. These same privileged persons are victims of the struggle between one human being and another that pollutes all social life, and they would gain substantially if they were able to live in a society of mutual trust, free among the free, equal among equals.

However can you maintain the view that solidarity damages liberty and the development of the individual? If we were discussing the family — and we will discuss it whenever you want — you could not fail to let loose one of the usual conventional hymns to that holy institution, that foundation stone etc. etc. Well, in the family what is it we extol, if not that which generally exists — the love and solidarity prevailing among its members. Would you maintain that the family members would be freer and their individuality more developed if instead of loving each other and working together for the common good, they were to steal, hate and hit one another?

AMBROGIO: But to regulate society like a family, to organise and to make a communist society function, you need an immense centralisation, an iron despotism, and an omnipresent state. Imagine what oppressive power a government would have that could dispose of all social wealth and assign to everyone the work they must do and the goods they could consume!

GIORGIO: Certainly if communism was to be what you imagine it to be and how it is conceived by a few authoritarian schools then it would be an impossible thing to achieve, or, if possible, would end up as a colossal and very complex tyranny, that would then inevitably provoke a great reaction.

But there is none of this in the communism that we want. We want free communism, *anarchism*, if the word doesn't offend you. In other words, we want a communism which is freely organised, from bottom to top, starting from individuals that unite in associations which slowly grow bit by bit into ever more complex federations of associations, finally embracing the whole of humanity in a general agreement of cooperation and solidarity. And just as this communism will be freely, constituted, it must freely maintain itself through the will of those involved.

AMBROGIO: But for this to become possible you would need human beings to be angels, for everyone to be altruists! Instead people are by nature egoistical, wicked, hypocritical and lazy.

GIORGIO: Certainly, because for communism to become possible there is a need that human beings, partly because of an impulse toward sociability and partly from a clear understanding of their interests, don't bear each other ill-will but want to get on and to practice mutual aid. But this state is far from seeming an impossibility, is even now normal and common. The present social organisation is a permanent cause of antagonism and conflict between classes and individuals: and if despite this society is still able to maintain itself and doesn't literally degenerate into a pack of wolves devouring each other, it is precisely because of the profound human instinct for society that produces the thousand acts of solidarity, of sympathy, of devotion, of sacrifice that are carried out every moment, without them even being thought about, that makes possible the continuance of society, notwithstanding the causes of disintegration that it carries within itself.

Human beings are, by nature, both egoistic and altruistic, biologically pre-determined I would say prior to society. If humans had not been egoistic, if, that is to say, they had not had the instinct of self-preservation, they could not have existed as individuals; and if they hadn't been altruistic, in other words if they hadn't had the instinct of sacrificing themselves for others, the first manifestation of which one finds in the love of one's children, they could not have existed as a species, nor, most probably, have developed a social life.

The coexistence of the egoistic and the altruistic sentiment and the impossibility in existing society of satisfying both ensures that today no one is satisfied, not even those who are in privileged positions. On the other hand communism is the social form in which egoism and altruism mingle — and every person will accept it because it benefits everybody.

AMBROGIO: It may be as you say: but do you think that everybody would want and would know how to adapt themselves to the duties that a communist society imposes, if, for instance, people do not want to work? Of course, you have an answer for everything in theory, as best suits your argument, and you will tell me that work is an organic need, a pleasure, and that everybody will compete to have as much as possible of such a pleasure!

GIORGIO: I am not saying that, although I know that you would find that many of my friends who would say so. According to me what is an

organic need and a pleasure is movement, nervous and muscular activity; but work is a disciplined activity aimed at an objective goal, external to the organism. And I well understand how it is that one may prefer horse-riding when, instead it is necessary to plant cabbages. But, I believe that human beings, when they have an end in view, can adapt and do adapt to the conditions necessary to achieve it.

Since the products that one obtains through work are necessary for survival, and since nobody will have the means to force others to work for them, everyone will recognise the necessity of working and will favour that structure in which work will be less tiring and more productive, and that is, in my view, a communist organisation.

Consider also that in communism these same workers organise and direct work, and therefore have every interest in making it light and enjoyable; consider that in communism there will naturally develop a public view that will condemn idleness as damaging to all, and if there will be some loafers, they will only be an insignificant minority, which could be tolerated without any perceptible harm.

AMBROGIO: But suppose that in spite of your optimistic forecasts there should be a great number of loafers, what would you do? Would you support them? If so, then you might as well support those whom you call the bourgeoisie!

GIORGIO: Truly there is a great difference; because the bourgeois not only take part of what we produce, but they prevent us from producing what we want and how we want to produce it. Nonetheless I am by no means saying that we should maintain idlers, when they are in such numbers as to cause damage: I am very afraid that idleness and the habit of living off others may lead to a desire to command. Communism is a free agreement: who doesn't accept it or maintain it, remains outside of it.

AMBROGIO: But then there will be a new underprivileged class?

GIORGIO: Not at all. Everyone has the right to land, to the instruments of production and all the advantages that human beings can enjoy in the state of civilization that humanity has reached. If someone does not want to accept a communist life and the obligation that it supposes, it is their business. They and those of a like mind will come to an agreement, and if they find themselves in a worse state than the others this will prove to them the superiority of communism and will impel them to unite with the communists.

AMBROGIO: So therefore one will be free not to accept communism?

GIORGIO: Certainly: and whoever it is, will have the same rights as the communists over the natural wealth and accumulated products of previous generations. For heavens sake!! I have always spoken of free agreement, of free communism. How could there be liberty without a possible alternative?

AMBROGIO: So, you don't want to impose your ideas with force?

GIORGIO: Oh! Are you crazy? Do you take us for policemen or magistrates?

AMBROGIO: Well, there is nothing wrong then. Everyone is free to pursue their dream!

GIORGIO: Be careful not to make a blunder: to impose ideas is one thing, to defend oneself from thieves and violence, and regain one's rights is something else.

AMBROGIO : Ah! Ah! So to *regain your rights* you would use force, is that right?

GIORGIO: To this I won't give you an answer: it may be useful to you in putting together a bill of indictment in some trial. What I will tell you is that certainly, when the people have become conscious of their rights and want to put an end to... you will run the risk of being treated rather roughly. But this will depend on the resistance that you offer. If you give up with goodwill, everything will be peaceful and amiable; if on the contrary you are pig-headed, and I'm sure that you will be, so much the worse for you. Good evening.

EIGHT

AMBROGIO: You know! The more I think about your free communism the more I am persuaded that you are... a true original.

GIORGIO: And why is that?

AMBROGIO: Because you always talk about work, enjoyment, accords, agreements, but you never talk of social authority, of government. Who will regulate social life? What will be the government? How will it be constituted? Who will elect it? By what means will it ensure that laws are respected and offenders punished? How will the various powers be constituted, legislative, executive or judicial?

GIORGIO: We don't know what to do with all these powers of yours. We don't want a government. Are you still not aware that I am an anarchist?

AMBROGIO: Well, I've told you that you are an original. I could still understand communism and admit that it might be able to offer great advantages, if everything were to be still regulated by an enlightened government, which had the strength to make everybody have a respect for the law. But like this, without government, without law! What kind of muddle would there be?

GIORGIO: I had foreseen this: first you were against communism because you said that it needed a strong and centralised government; now that you have heard talk of a society without government, you would even accept communism, so long as there was a government with an iron fist. In short, it is liberty which scares you most of all!

AMBROGIO: But this is to jump out of the frying pan into the fire! What is certain is that a society without a government cannot exist. How would you expect things to work, without rules, without regulations of any kind? What will happen is that someone will steer to the right, somebody else to the left and the ship will remain stationary, or more likely, go to the bottom.

GIORGIO: I did not say that I do not want rules and regulations. I said to you that I don't want a *Government*, and by government I mean a power that makes laws and imposes them on everybody.

AMBROGIO: But if this government is elected by the people doesn't it represent the will of those same people? What could you complain about?

GIORGIO: This is simply a lie. A general, abstract, popular will is no more than a metaphysical fancy. The public is comprised of people, and

people have a thousand different and varying wills according to variations in temperament and in circumstances, and expecting to extract from them, through the magic operation of the ballot box, a general will common to all is simply an absurdity. It would be impossible even for a single individual to entrust to somebody else the execution of their will on all the questions that could arise during a given period of time; because they themselves could not say in advance what would be their will on these various occasions. How could one speak for a collectivity, people, whose members at the very time of producing a mandate were already in disagreement among themselves?

Just think for a moment at the way elections are held — and note that, I intend speaking about the way they would work if all the people were educated and independent and thus the vote perfectly conscious and free. You, for instance, would vote for whoever you regard as best suited to serve your interests and to apply your ideas. This is already conceding a lot, because you have so many ideas and so many different interests that you would not know how to find a person that thinks always like you on all issues: but will it be then to such a person that you will give your vote and who will govern you? By no means. Your candidate might not be successful and so your will forms no part of the so called popular will: but let's suppose that they do succeed.

On this basis would this person be your ruler? Not even in your dreams. They would only be one among many (in the Italian parliament for instance one among 535) and you in reality will be ruled by a majority of people to whom you have never given your mandate. And this majority (whose members have received many different or contradictory mandates, or better still have received only a general delegation of power, without any specific mandate) unable, even if it wanted to, to ascertain a non-existent general will, and to make everybody happy, will do as it wishes, or will follow the wishes of those who dominate it at a particular moment.

Come on, it's better to leave aside this old-fashioned pretence of a government that represents the popular will.

There are certainly some questions of general order, about which at a given moment, all the people will agree. But, then, what is the point of government? When everybody wants something, they will only need to enact it.

AMBROGIO: Well in short, you have admitted that there is a need for rules, some norms for living. Who should establish them?

GIORGIO: The interested parties themselves, those who must follow these regulations.

AMBROGIO: Who would impose observance?

GIORGIO: No-one, because we are talking about norms which are freely accepted and freely followed. Don't confuse the norms of which I speak, that are practical conventions based on a feeling of solidarity and on the care that everyone must have for the collective interest, with the law which is a rule written by a few and imposed with force on everybody. We don't want laws, but free agreements.

AMBROGIO: And if someone violates the agreement?

GIORGIO: And why should someone violate an agreement with which they have has concurred? On the other hand, if some violations were to take place, they would serve as a notification that the agreement does not satisfy everybody and will have to be modified. And everybody will search for a better arrangement, because it is in everybody's interest that nobody is unhappy.

AMBROGIO : But it seems that you long for a primitive society in which everyone is self-sufficient and the relations between people are few, basic and restricted.

GIORGIO: Not at all. Since from the moment that social relations multiply and become more complex, humanity experiences greater moral and material satisfaction, we will seek relationships as numerous and complex as possible.

AMBROGIO: But then you will need to delegate functions, to give out tasks, to nominate representatives in order to establish agreements.

GIORGIO : Certainly. But don't think that this is equivalent to nominating a government. The government makes laws and enforces them, while in a free society delegation of power is only for particular, temporary tasks, for certain jobs, and does not give rights to any authority nor any special reward. And the resolutions of the delegates are always subject to the approval of those they represent.

AMBROGIO: But you don't imagine that everyone will always agree. If there are some people that your social order does not suit, what will you do?

GIORGIO: Those people will make whatever arrangements best suit them, and we and they will reach an agreement to avoid bothering each other.

AMBROGIO: And if the others want to make trouble?

GIORGIO: Then... we will defend ourselves.

AMBROGIO: Ah! But don't you see that from this need for defence a new government might arise?

GIORGIO: Certainly I see it: and it is precisely because of this that I've always said that anarchism is not possible until the most serious causes of conflict are eliminated, a social accord serves the interests of all, and the spirit of solidarity is well developed among humanity.

If you want to create anarchism today, leaving intact individual property and the other social institutions that derive from it, such a civil war would immediately break out that a government, even a tyranny, would be welcomed as a blessing.

But if at the same time that you establish anarchism you abolish individual property, the causes of conflict that will survive will not be insurmountable and we will reach an agreement, because with agreement everyone will be advantaged.

After all, it is understood that institutions are only worth as much as the people that make them function — and anarchism in particular, that is the reign of free agreement, cannot exist if people do not understand the benefits of solidarity and don't want to agree.

That is why we engage in spreading propaganda.

NINE

AMBROGIO: Allow me to return to your anarchist communism. Frankly I cannot put up with it...

GIORGIO: Ah! I believe you. After having lived your life between codices and books of law in order to defend the rights of the State and those of the proprietors, a society without State and proprietors, in which there will no longer be any rebels and starving people to send to the galleys, must seem to you like something from another world.

But if you wish to set aside this attitude, if you have the strength to overcome your habits of mind and wish to reflect on this matter without bias, you would easily understand, that, allowing that the aim of society has to be the greatest well being for all, one necessarily arrives at anarchist communism as the solution. If you think on the contrary that society is made to engross a few pleasure loving individuals at the expense of the rest, well...

AMBROGIO: No, no, I admit that society must have as a goal the well being of all, but I cannot because of this accept your system. I am trying hard to get inside your point of view, and since I have taken an interest in the discussion I would like, at least for myself, to have a clear idea of what you want: but your conclusions seem to be so utopian, so...

GIORGIO: But in short, what is it that you find obscure or unacceptable in the explanation that I have given you.

AMBROGIO: There is... I don't know... the whole system.

Let's leave aside the question of right, on which we will not agree; but let us suppose that, as you maintain, we all have an equal right to enjoy the existing wealth, I admit that communism would seem to be the most expeditious arrangement and perhaps the best. But, what seems to me absolutely impossible, is a society without government.

You build the whole of your edifice on the free will of the members of the association...

GIORGIO: Precisely.

AMBROGIO: And this is your error. Society means hierarchy, discipline, the submission of the individual to the collective. Without authority no society is possible.

GIORGIO. Exactly the reverse. A society in the strict sense of the word can only exist among equals; and these equals make agreements among themselves if in them they find pleasure and convenience, but they will not submit to each other.

Those relations of hierarchy and submission, that to you seem the essence of society, are relations between slaves and masters: and you would admit, I hope, that the slave is not really the partner of the master, just as a domestic animal is not the partner of the person who possesses it.

AMBROGIO: But do you truly believe in a society in which each person does what they want!

GIORGIO: On condition it's understood that people want to live in a society and therefore will adapt themselves to the necessities of social life.

AMBROGIO: And if they don't wish to?

GIORGIO: Then society would not be possible. But since it is only within society that humanity, at least in its modern form, can satisfy its material and moral needs, it is a strange supposition that we would wish to renounce what is the precondition of life and well being.

People have difficulty in coming to agreement when they discuss matters in abstract terms; but as soon as there is something to do, that must be done and which is of interest to everybody, as long as no one has the means to impose their will on others and to force them to do things their way, obstinacy and stubbornness soon cease, they become conciliatory, and the thing is done with the maximum possible satisfaction to everyone.

You must understand: nothing human is possible without the will of humanity. The whole problem for us lies in changing this will, that is to say it means making people understand that to war against each other, to hate each other, to exploit each other, is to lose everything, and persuading them to wish for a social order founded on mutual support and on solidarity.

AMBROGIO: So to bring about your anarchist communism you must wait until everybody is so persuaded, and has the will to make it work.

GIORGIO: Oh, no! We'd be kidding ourselves! Will is mostly determined by the social environment, and it is probable that while the present conditions last, the great majority will continue to believe that society cannot be organized in other ways from what now exists.

AMBROGIO: Well then?!

GIORGIO: So, we will create communism and anarchism among ourselves... when we are in sufficient numbers to do it — convinced that if others see that we are doing well for ourselves, they will soon follow suit Or, at least, if we cannot achieve communism and anarchism, we will work to change social conditions in such a way as to produce a change of will in the desired direction.

You must understand; this is about a reciprocal interaction between the will and the surrounding social conditions... We are doing and will do whatever we can do so that we move towards our ideal.

What you must clearly understand is this. We do not want to coerce the will of anyone; but we do not want others to coerce our will nor that of the public. We rebel against that minority which through violence exploits and oppresses the people. Once liberty is won for ourselves and for all, and, it goes without saying, the means to be free, in other words the right to the use of land and of the instruments of production, we will rely solely on the force of words and examples to make our ideas triumph.

AMBROGIO: All right; and you think that in this way we will arrive at a society that governs itself simply through the voluntary agreement of its members? If that is the case it would be a thing without *precedent*!

GIORGIO: Not as much as you might think. As a matter of fact, in essence it has always been like that... that is if one considers the defeated, the dominated, the oppressed drawn from the lower levels of humanity, as not really part of society.

After all, even today the essential part of social life, in the dominant class as in the dominated class, is accomplished through spontaneous agreements, often unconscious, between individuals: by virtue of custom, points of honour, respect for promises, fear of public opinion, a sense of honesty, love, sympathy, rules of good manners — without any intervention by the law and the government. Law and governments become necessary only when we deal with relations between the dominators and the dominated. Among equals everyone feels ashamed to call a policeman, or have recourse to a judge!

In despotic States, where all the inhabitants are treated like a herd in the service of the sole ruler, no one has a will but the sovereign... and those whom the sovereign needs to keep the masses submissive. But, little by little as others arrive and achieve emancipation and enter the dominant class, that is society in the strict sense of the word, either through direct participation in government or by means of pos-

sessing wealth, society moulds itself in ways which satisfy the will of all the dominators. The whole legislative and executive apparatus, the whole government with its laws, soldiers, policemen, judges etc. serve only to regulate and ensure the exploitation of the people. Otherwise, the owners would find it simpler and more economical to agree among themselves and do away with the state. The bourgeois themselves have voiced the same opinion... when for a moment they forget that without soldiers and policemen the people would spoil the party.

Destroy class divisions, make sure that there are no more slaves to keep in check, and immediately the state will have no more reason to exist.

AMBROGIO: But don't exaggerate. The State also does things of benefit to all. It educates, watches over public health, defends the lives of citizens, organises public services... don't tell me that these are worthless or damaging things!

GIORGIO: Ugh! — Done the way the State usually does it, that is hardly at all. The truth is that it is always the workers who really do those things, and the State, setting itself up as their regulator, transforms such services into instruments of domination, turning them to the special advantage of the rulers and owners.

Education spreads, if there is in the public the desire for instruction and if there are teachers capable of educating; public health thrives, when the public knows, appreciates and can put into practice public health rules, and when there are doctors capable of giving people advice; the lives of citizens are safe when the people are accustomed to consider life and human liberties sacred and when... there are no judges and no police force to provide examples of brutality; public services will be organised when the public feels the need for them.

The State does not create anything: at best it is only other a superfluity, a worthless waste of energy. But if only it was just useless!

AMBROGIO: Leave it there. In any case I think you have said enough. I want to reflect upon it.

Until we meet again...

TEN

AMBROGIO: I have reflected on what you have been telling me during these conversations of ours... And I give up the debate. Not because I admit defeat; but... in a word, you have your arguments and the future may well be with you.

I am, in the meantime, a magistrate and as long as there is law, I must respect it and ensure that it is respected. You understand...

GIORGIO: Oh, I understand very well. Go, go if you like. It will be up to us to abolish the law, and so free you from the obligation to act against your conscience.

AMBROGIO: Easy, easy, I didn't say that... but, never mind.

I would like a few other explanations from you.

We could perhaps come to an understanding on the questions regarding the property regime and the political organisation of society; after all they are historic formations that have changed many times and possibly will change again. But there are some sacred institutions, some profound emotions of the human heart that you continually offend: the family, the fatherland!

For instance, you want to put everything in common. Naturally you will put even women in common, and thus make a great seraglio; isn't this so?

GIORGIO: Listen; if you want to have a discussion with me, please don't say foolish things and make jokes in bad taste. The question we are dealing with is too serious to interpose vulgar jokes!

AMBROGIO: But... I was serious. What would you do with the women?

GIORGIO: Then, so much the worse for you, because it is really strange that you don't understand the absurdity of what you have just said.

Put women in common! Why don't you say that we want to put men in common? The only explanation for this idea of yours is that you, through ingrained habit, consider woman as an inferior being made and placed on this world to serve as a domestic animal and as an instrument of pleasure for the male sex, and so you speak of her as if she were a thing, and imagine that we must assign her the same destiny as we assign to things.

But, we who consider woman as a human being equal to ourselves, who should enjoy all the rights and all the resources enjoyed by, or that ought to be enjoyed, by the male sex, find the question, "What will you do with the women?" empty of meaning. Ask instead: "What will the women do?" and I will answer that *they will do what they want to do*, and since they have the same need as men to live in a society, it is certain that *they will want* to come to agreements with their fellow creatures, men and women, in order to satisfy their needs to the best advantage for themselves and everybody else.

AMBROGIO: I see; you consider women as equal to men. Yet many scientists, examining the anatomical structure and the physiological functions of the female body, maintain that woman is naturally inferior to man.

GIORGIO: Yes, of course. Whatever needs to be maintained, there is always a scientist willing to maintain it. There are some scientists that maintain the inferiority of women as there are others that, on the contrary, maintain that the understanding of women and their capacity for development are equal to that of men, and if today women generally appear to have less capacity than men this is due to the education they have received and the environment in which they live. If you search carefully you will even find some scientists, or at least women scientists, that assert that man is an inferior being, destined to liberate women from material toil and leave them free to develop their talents in an unlimited way. I believe that this view has been asserted in America.

But who cares. This is not about resolving a scientific problem, but about realising a vow, a human ideal.

Give to women all the means and the liberty to develop and what will come will come. If women are equal to men, or if they are more or less intelligent, it will show in practice and even science will be advantaged, as it will have some positive data upon which to base its inductions.

AMBROGIO: So you don't take into consideration the faculties with which individuals are endowed?

GIORGIO: Not in the sense that these should create special rights. In nature you will not find two equal individuals; but we claim social equality for all, in other words the same resources, the same opportunities — and we think that this equality not only corresponds to the feelings of justice and fraternity that have developed in humanity, but works to the benefit of all, whether they are strong or weak.

Even among men, among males, there are some who are more and others who are less intelligent, but this does not mean that the one should have more rights than the other. There are some who hold that blondes are more gifted than brunettes or vice versa, that races with oblong skulls are superior to those with broad skulls or vice versa; and the issue, if it is based on real facts, is certainly interesting for science. But, given the current state of feelings and human ideals, it would be absurd to pretend that blondes and the dolichocephalic should command the browns and the branchycephalic or the other way round.

Don't you think so?

AMBROGIO: All right; but let's look at the question of the family. Do you want to abolish it or organise it on another basis?

GIORGIO: Look. As far as the family is concerned we need to consider the economic relations, the sexual relations, and the relations between parents and children.

Insofar as the family is an economic institution it is clear that once individual property is abolished and as a consequence inheritance, it has no more reason to exist and will *de facto* disappear. In this sense, however, the family is already abolished for the great majority of the population, which is composed of proletarians.

AMBROGIO: And as far as sexual relations? Do you want free love, do...

GIORGIO: Oh, come on! Do you think that enslaved love could really exist? Forced cohabitation exists, as does feigned and forced love, for reasons of interest or of social convenience; probably there will be men and women who will respect the bond of matrimony because of religious or moral convictions; but true love cannot exist, can not be conceived, if it is not perfectly free.

AMBROGIO: This is true, but if everyone follows the fancies inspired by the god of love, there will be no more morals and the world will become a brothel.

GIORGIO: As far as morals are concerned, you can really brag about the results of your institutions! Adultery, lies of every sort, long cherished hatreds, husbands that kill wives, wives that poison husbands, infanticide, children growing up amidst scandals and family brawls... And this is the morality that you fear is being threatened by free love?

Today the world is a brothel, because women are often forced to prostitute themselves through hunger; and because matrimony, frequently contracted through a pure calculation of interest, is throughout the whole of its duration a union into which love either does not enter at all, or enters only as an accessory.

Assure everyone of the means to live properly and independently, give women the complete liberty to dispose of their own bodies, destroy the prejudices, religious and otherwise, that bind men and women to a mass of conventions that derive from slavery and which perpetuate it and sexual unions will be made of love, and will give rise to the happiness of individuals and the good of the species.

AMBROGIO: But in short, are you in favour of lasting or temporary unions? Do you want separate couples, or a multiplicity and variety of sexual relations, or even promiscuity?

GIORGIO: We want liberty.

Up to now sexual relations have suffered enormously from the pressure of brutal violence, of economic necessity, of religious prejudices and legal regulations, that it has not been possible to work out what is the form of sexual relations which best corresponds to the physical and moral well being of individuals and the species.

Certainly, once we eliminate the conditions that today render the relations between men and women artificial and forced, a sexual hygiene and a sexual morality will be established that will be respected, not because of the law, but through the conviction, based on experience, that they satisfy our well being and that of the species. This can only come about as the effect of liberty.

AMBROGIO: And the children?

GIORGIO: You must understand that once we have property in common, and establish on a solid moral and material base the principle of social solidarity, the maintenance of the children will be the concern of the community, and their education will be the care and responsibility of everyone.

Probably all men and all women will love all the children; and if, as I believe is certain, parents have a special affection for their own children, they can only be delighted to know that the future of their children is secure, having for their maintenance and their education the cooperation of the whole society.

AMBROGIO: But, you do, at least, respect parents' rights over their children?

GIORGIO: Rights over children are composed of duties. One has many rights over them, that is to say many rights to guide them and to care for them, to love them and to worry about them: and since parents generally love their children more than anyone else, it is usually their duty and their right to provide for their needs. It isn't necessary to fear any challenges to this, because if a few unnatural parents give their children scant love and do not look after them they will be content that others will take care of the children and free them of the task.

If by a parent's rights over their children you mean the right to maltreat, corrupt and exploit them, then I absolutely reject those rights, and I think that no society worthy of the name would recognize and put up with them.

AMBROGIO: But don't you think that by entrusting the responsibility for the maintenance of children to the community you will provoke such an increase in population that there will no longer be enough for everyone to live on. But of course, you won't want to hear any talk of Malthusianism and will say that it is an absurdity.

GIORGIO: I told you on another occasion that it is absurd to pretend that the present poverty depends on overpopulation and absurd to wish to propose remedies based on Malthusian practices. But I am very willing to recognise the seriousness of the population question, and I admit that in the future, when every new born child is assured of support, poverty could be reborn due to a real excess of population. Emancipated and educated men, when they think it necessary, will consider placing a limit to the overly rapid multiplication of the species; but I would add that they will think seriously about it only when hoarding and privileges, obstacles placed upon production by the greediness of the proprietors and all the social causes of poverty are eliminated, only then will the necessity of achieving a balance between the number of living beings, production capacities, and available space, appear to everyone clear and simple.

AMBROGIO: And if people don't want to think about it?

GIORGIO: Well then, all the worse for them!

You don't want to understand: there is no providence, whether divine or natural, that looks after the well-being of humanity. People have to

procure their own well-being, doing what they think is useful and necessary to reach this goal.

You always say: but what if they don't want to? In this case they will achieve nothing and will always remain at the mercy of the blind forces that surround them.

So it is today: people don't know what to do to become free, or if they know, don't want to do what needs to be done to liberate themselves. And thus, they remain slaves.

But we hope that sooner than you might think they will know what to do and be capable of doing it.

Then they will be free.

ELEVEN

AMBROGIO: The other day you concluded that everything depends on the will. You were saying that if people want to be free, if they want to do what needs to be done to live in a society of equals, everything will be fine: or if not so much the worse for them. This would be all right if they all want the same thing; but if some want to live in anarchy and others prefer the guardianship of a government, if some are prepared to take into consideration the needs of the community and others want to enjoy the benefits derived from social life, but do not want to adapt themselves to the necessities involved, and want to do what they like without taking into account the damage it could do to others, what happens if there is no government that determines and imposes social duties?

GIORGIO: If there is a government, the will of the rulers and of their party and associated interests will triumph — and the problem, which is how to satisfy the will of all, is not resolved. On the contrary, the difficulty is aggravated. The governing fraction can not only use its own resources to ignore or violate the will of others, but has at its disposal the strength of the whole society to impose its will. This is the case in our present society where the working class provides the government with the soldiers and the wealth to keep the workers slaves.

I think I have already told you: we want a society in which everyone has the means to live as they like, where no one can force others to work for them, where no one can compel another to submit to their will. Once two principles are put into practice, liberty for all and the instruments

of production for all, everything else will follow naturally, through force of circumstances, and the new society will organise itself in the way that agrees best with the interests of all.

AMBROGIO: And if some want to impose themselves by crude force?

GIORGIO: Then they will be the government; or the candidates for government, and we will oppose them with force. You must understand that if today we want to make a revolution against the government, it is not in order to submit ourselves supinely to new oppressors. If such as these win, the revolution would be defeated, and it would have to be remade.

AMBROGIO: But, you would surely allow some ethical principles, superior to the wills and caprices of humanity, and to which everyone is obliged to conform... at least morally?

GIORGIO: What is this morality that is superior to the will of men? Who prescribed it? From whence does it derive?

Morals change according to the times, the countries, the classes, the circumstances. They express what people at given moments and in given circumstances, regard as the best conduct. In short, for each person good morals accord with what they like or what pleases them, for material or for emotional reasons.

For you morality enjoins respect for the law, that is, submission to the privileges enjoyed by your class; for us it demands a revolt against oppression and the search for the well being of everyone. For us all moral prescriptions are comprehended by love between people.

AMBROGIO: And the criminals? Will you respect their liberty?

GIORGIO: We believe that to act criminally means to violate the liberty of others. When the criminals are many and powerful and have organised their dominance on a stable basis, as is the case, today, with the owners and rulers, there needs to be a revolution to liberate oneself.

When, on the contrary, criminality is reduced to individual cases of unsuitable behaviour or of illness, we will attempt to find the causes and to introduce them to appropriate remedies.

AMBROGIO: In the meantime? You will need a police force, a magistrature, a penal code, some gaolers, etc...

GIORGIO: And therefore, you would say, the reconstitution of a government, the return to the state of oppression under which we live today.

In fact, the major damage caused by crime is not so much the single and transitory instance of the violation of the rights of a few individuals, but the danger that it will serve as an opportunity and pretext for the constitution of an authority that, with the outward appearance of defending society will subdue and oppress it.

We already know the purpose of the police and the magistrature, and how they are the cause rather than the remedy of innumerable crimes.

We need therefore to try to destroy crime by eliminating the causes; and when there remains a residue of criminals, the collective directly concerned should think of placing them in a position where they can do no harm, without delegating to anyone the specific function of persecuting criminals.

You do know the story of the horse which asked protection from a man, and allowed him to mount on its back?

AMBROGIO: All right. At this point I am only seeking some information and not a discussion.

Another thing. Seeing that in your society all are socially equal, all have a right to the same access to education and development, all have full liberty to choose their own life, how are you going to provide for the necessary tasks. There are pleasant and laborious jobs, healthy and unhealthy jobs. Naturally each person will choose the better jobs — who would do the others, that are often the most necessary?

And then there is the great division between intellectual and manual labour. Don't you think that everyone would like to be doctors, *litterati*, poets, and that no one would wish to cultivate the land, make shoes etc. etc. Well?

GIORGIO: You want to look forward to a future society, a society of equality, liberty and above all solidarity and free agreement, presuming the continuation of the moral and material conditions of today. Naturally the thing appears and is impossible.

When everybody has the means, everyone will reach the maximum material and intellectual development that their natural faculties will permit: everybody will be initiated into intellectual joys and into productive labour; the body and brain will develop harmoniously; at different levels, according to capacity and inclination, everybody will be scientists and *litterati* versed in literature and everybody will be workers.

What would happen then?

Imagine that a few thousand doctors, engineers, *litterati*, and artists, were to be transported to a vast and fertile island, provided with the instruments of work and left to themselves.

Do you think that they will let themselves die of hunger rather than working with their own hands, or that they would kill themselves rather than coming to an agreement and dividing work according to their inclinations and their capacities? If there were jobs that no one wanted to do, they would all do them in turn, and everyone would search for the means to make unhealthy and unpleasant jobs safe and enjoyable.

AMBROGIO: Enough, enough, I must have another thousand questions to put to you, but you wander in a total utopia and find imaginary ways to resolve all the problems.

I would prefer that you talk to me about the ways and means by which you propose to realise your dreams.

GIORGIO: With pleasure, so much so since as for as I am concerned, even though the ideal is useful and necessary as a way of indicating the final goal, the most urgent question is what must be done today and in the immediate future.

We will talk about it next time.

TWELVE

AMBROGIO: So tonight you will talk to us about the means by which you propose to attain your ideals... to create anarchism.

I can already imagine. There will be bombs, massacres, summary executions; and then plunder, arson and similar niceties.

GIORGIO: You, my dear, sir, have simply come to the wrong person — you must have thought you were talking to some official or other who commands European soldiers, when they go *to civilise* Africa or Asia, or when they *civilise* each other back home.

That's not my style, please believe me.

CESARE: I think, my dear sir, that our friend, who has at last shown that he is a reasonable young man although too much of a dreamer, awaits the triumph of ideas through the natural evolution of society,

the spread of education, the progress of science, the development of production.

And after all there is nothing wrong with that. If anarchism has to come, it will come, and it is useless to rack our brains to avoid the inevitable.

But then... it is so far away! Let's live in peace.

GIORGIO: Indeed, would that not be a good reason for you to indulge yourself!

But no, Signor Cesare, I don't rely on evolution, on science and the rest. One would have to wait too long! And, what is worse, one would wait in vain!

Human evolution moves in the direction in which it is driven by the will of humanity, and there is no natural law that says evolution must inevitably give priority to liberty rather than the permanent division of society into two castes, I could almost say into two races, that of the dominators and that of the dominated.

Every state of society, because it has found sufficient reasons to exist, can also persist indefinitely, so long as the dominators don't meet a conscious, active, aggressive opposition from the dominated. The factors of disintegration and spontaneous death which exist in every regime, even when there are compensatory factors of reconstruction and vitality to act as antidotes, can always be neutralized by the skill of whoever disposes of the force of society and directs it as they wish.

I could demonstrate to you, if I wasn't afraid of taking too much time, how the bourgeoisie are protecting themselves from those *natural* tendencies, from which certain socialists were expecting their imminent death.

Science is a potent weapon that can be used equally for good or for evil. And since in the current conditions of inequality, it is more accessible to the privileged than the oppressed, it is more useful to the former than the latter.

Education, at least that which goes beyond a superficial smattering, is almost useless, and is inaccessible to the underprivileged masses — and even then it can be directed in a way chosen by the educators, or rather by those who pay and choose the educators.

AMBROGIO: But, then all that is left is violence!

GIORGIO: Namely, the revolution.

AMBROGIO: Violent revolution? Armed revolution?

GIORGIO: Precisely.

AMBROGIO: Therefore, bombs…

GIORGIO: Nevermind all that, Signor Ambrogio. You are a magistrate, but I don't like having to repeat that this is not a tribunal, and, for the moment at least, I am not a defendant, from whose mouth it would be in your interest to draw some imprudent remark.

The revolution will be violent because you, the dominant class, maintain yourselves with violence and don't show any inclination to give up peacefully. So there will be gunfire, bombs, radio waves that will explode your deposits of explosives and the cartridges in the cartridge-boxes of your soldiers from a distance… all this may happen. These are technical questions that, if you like, we'll leave to the technicians.

What I can assure you of is that, as far as it depends on us, the violence, which has been imposed on us by your violence, will not go beyond the narrow limits indicated by the necessity of the struggle, that is to say that it will above all be determined by the resistance you offer. If the worst should happen, it will be due to your obstinacy and the bloodthirsty education that, by your example, you are providing to the public.

CESARE: But how will you make this revolution, if there are so few of you?

GIORGIO: It is possible that there is only a limited number of us. It suits you to hope so, and I don't want to take this sweet illusion from you. It means that we will be forced to double and then redouble our numbers…

Certainly our task, when there are no opportunities to do more, is to use propaganda to gather a minority of conscious individuals who will know what they have to do and are committed to doing it. Our task is that of preparing the masses, or as much of the masses as possible, to act in the right direction when the occasion arises. And by the right direction we mean: expropriate the current holders of social wealth, throw down the authorities, prevent the formation of new privileges and new forms of government and reorganise directly, through the activity of the workers, production, distribution and the whole of social life.

CESARE: And if the occasion doesn't arise?

GIORGIO: Well, we'll look for ways to make it happen.

PROSPERO: How many illusions you have, my boy!!!
You think that we are still in the time of stone-age weapons.
With modern arms and tactics you would be massacred before you could move.

GIORGIO: Not necessarily. To new arms and tactics it is possible to oppose appropriate responses.
And then again, these arms are actually in the hands of the sons of the people, and you, by forcing everyone to undertake military service, are teaching everybody how to handle them.
Oh! You cannot imagine how really helpless you'll be on the day a sufficient number rebel.
It is we, the proletariat, the oppressed class, who are the electricians and gas-fitters, we who drive the locomotives, it is we who make the explosives and shape the mines, it is we who drive automobiles and aeroplanes, it is we who are the soldiers... it is we, unfortunately, that defend you against ourselves. You only survive because of the unwitting agreement of your victims. Be careful of awakening their consciousness...
And then you know, among anarchists everybody governs their own actions, and your police force is used to looking everywhere, except where the real danger is.
But I do not intend to give you a course in insurrectional technique. This is a matter that... does not concern you.
Good evening.

THIRTEEN

VINCENZO [*Young Republican*]: Permit me to enter into your conversation so that I can ask a few questions and make a few observations?... Our friend Giorgio talks of anarchism, but says that anarchism must come freely, without imposition, through the will of the people. And he also says that to give a free outlet to the people's will there is a need to demolish by insurrection the monarchic and militarist regime which today suffocates and falsifies this will. This is what the republicans want, at least the revolutionary republicans, in other words those who truly want to make the republic. Why then don't you declare yourself a republican?

In a republic the people are sovereign, and if one does what the people want, and they want anarchism there will be anarchism.

GIORGIO: Truly I believe I have always spoken of the *will of humanity* and not the *will of the people*, and if I said the lalter it was a form of words, an inexact use of language, that the whole of my conversation serves, after all, to correct.

VINCENZO: But, what is all this concern with words?!! Isn't the public made up of human beings?

GIORGIO: It is not a question of words. It is a question of substance: it is all the difference between *democracy*, which means the government of the people, and *anarchism*, which does not mean government, but liberty for each and everyone.

The people are certainly made up of humanity, that is of a conscious unity, interdependent as far as they choose, but each person has their own sensitivities and their own interests, passions, particular wills, that, according to the situation, augment or annul each other, reinforce or neutralise each other in turn. The strongest, the best-armed will, of an individual, of a party, of a class able to dominate, imposes itself and succeeds in passing itself off as the will of all; in reality that which calls itself the *will of the people* is the will of those who dominate — or it's a hybrid product of numerical calculations which don't exactly correspond to the will of anyone and which satisfies no-one.

Already by their own statements the democrats, that is the republicans (because they are the only true democrats) admit that the so-called government of the people is only the government of the majority, which expresses and carries out its will by means of its representatives. Therefore the "sovereignty" of the minority is simply a nominal right that does not translate into action; and note that this "minority" in addition to being often the most advanced and progressive part of the population, may also be the numerical majority when a minority united by a community of interests or ideas, or by their submission to a leader, find themselves facing many discordant factions.

But the party whose candidates succeed and which therefore governs in the name of the majority, is it really a government that expresses the will of the majority? The functioning of a parliamentary system (necessary in every republic that is not a small and isolated independent commune) ensures that each representative is a single unit of the electoral body, one among many, and only counts for a hundredth or a thou-

sandth in the making of laws, which ought in the final analysis be the expression of the will of the majority of electors.

And now, let's leave aside the question of whether the republican regime can carry out the will of all and tell me at least what you want, what would you wish this republic to do, what social institutions ought it to bring into being.

VINCENZO: But it's obvious.

What I want, what all true republicans want is social justice, the emancipation of the workers, equality, liberty and fraternity.

A VOICE: Like they already have in France, in Switzerland and in America.

VINCENZO: Those are not true republics. You should direct your criticism at the true republic that we seek, and not at the various governments, bourgeois, military and clerical that in different parts of the world claim the name of republic. Otherwise in opposing socialism and anarchism I could cite so-called anarchists that are something else altogether.

GIORGIO: Well said. But why on earth haven't the existing republics turned out to be true republics? Why, as a matter of fact, is it that all, or almost all, having started with the ideals of equality, liberty and fraternity which are your ideals and I would say ours also, have been systems of privilege that are becoming entrenched, in which workers are exploited in the extreme, the capitalists are very powerful, the people greatly oppressed and the government as wholly dishonest as in any monarchic regime?

The political institutions, the regulating organs of society, the individual and collective rights recognised by the constitution are the same as they will be in your republic.

Why have the consequences been so bad or at least so negative, and why should they be different when it is your republic.

VINCENZO: Because... because...

GIORGIO: I'll tell you why, and it is that in those republics the economic conditions of the people remained substantially the same; the division of society into a propertied class and a proletarian class remained unaltered, and so true dominion remained in the hands of those who, possessing the monopoly of the means of production, held in their

power the great mass of the under-privileged. Naturally the privileged class did its utmost to consolidate its position, which would have been shaken by the revolutionary fervour out of which the republic was born, and soon things returned to what they were before... except, possibly, with respect to those differences, those advances which do not depend on the form of government, but on the growth in the consciousness of the workers, on the growth in confidence in its own strength, that the masses acquire every time they succeed in bringing down a government.

VINCENZO: But we completely recognise the importance of the economic question. We will establish a progressive tax that will make the rich shoulder the major share of public expenses, we will abolish protective duties, we will place a tax on uncultivated lands, we will establish a minimum salary, a ceiling on prices, we will make laws that will protect the workers...

GIORGIO: Even if you succeed in doing all this capitalists will once again find a way to render it useless or turn it to their advantage.

VINCENZO: In that case we will of course expropriate them perhaps without compensation and create communism.
Are you content?

GIORGIO: No, no... communism made through the will of a government instead of through the direct and voluntary work of groups of workers does not really appeal to me. If it was possible, it would be the most suffocating tyranny to which human society has ever been subjected.
But you say: we will do this or that as if because of the fact that you are republicans on the eve of the republic, when the republic is proclaimed you will be the government.
Since the republic is a system of what you call popular sovereignty, and this sovereignty expresses itself by means of universal suffrage, the republican government will be composed of men designated by the popular vote.
And since you have not in the act of republican revolution broken the power of the capitalists by expropriating them in a revolutionary manner, the first republican parliament will be one suited to the capitalists... and if not the first, which may still feel the effects to an extent of the revolutionary storm, certainly successive parliaments will be what the capitalists desire and will be obliged to destroy whatever good the revolution had by chance been able to do.

VINCENZO: But in that case, since anarchism is not possible today, must we calmly support the monarchy for who knows how long?

GIORGIO: By no means. You can count on our cooperation, just as we will be asking for yours, provided that the circumstances become favourable to an insurrectionary movement. Naturally the range of contributions that we will strive to give to that movement will be much broader than yours, but this does not invalidate the common interest we have in the shaking off the yoke that today oppresses both of us. Afterwards we will see.

In the meantime let us spread propaganda together and try to prepare the masses so that the next revolutionary movement sets in train the most profound social transformation possible, and leaves open, broadly and easily, the road toward further progress.

FOURTEEN

CESARE: Let's resume our usual conversation.

Apparently, the thing that most immediately interests you is the insurrection; and I admit that, however difficult it seems, it could be staged and won, sooner or later. In essence governments rely on soldiers; and the conscripted soldiers, who are forced reluctantly into the army barracks, are an unreliable weapon. Faced with a general uprising of the people, the soldiers who are themselves of the people, won't hold on for long; and as soon as the charm and the fear of discipline is broken, they will either disband or join the people.

I admit therefore that by spreading a lot of propaganda among the workers and the soldiers, or among the youth who tomorrow will be soldiers, you put yourselves in a position to take advantage of a favourable situation — economic crises, unsuccessful war, general strike, famine etc. etc. — to bring down the government.

But then?

You will tell me: the people themselves will decide, organise, etc. But these are words. What will probably take place is that after a shorter or longer period of disorder, of dissipation and probably of massacres, a new government will take the place of the other, will re-establish order... and everything will continue as before.

To what purpose then was such a waste of energy?

GIORGIO: If it should occur as you suggest, it does not mean that the insurrection would have been useless. After a revolution things do not return to as they were before because the people have enjoyed a period of liberty and have tested their own strength, and it is not easy to make them accept once again the previous conditions. The new government, if government there has to be, will feel that it cannot remain safely in power unless it gives some satisfaction, and normally it tries to justify its rise to power by giving itself the title of interpreter and successor of the revolution.

Naturally the real task the government will set itself will be to prevent the revolution going any further and to restrict and to alter, with the aim of domination, the gains of the revolution; but it could not return things to how they were before.

This is what has happened in all past revolutions.

However we have reason to hope that in the next revolution we will do a lot better.

CESARE: Why?

GIORGIO: Because in past revolutions all the revolutionaries, all the initiators and principal actors of the revolution wanted to transform society by means of laws and wanted a government that would make and impose those laws. It was inevitable therefore that it would produce a new government — and it was natural that a new government thought first of all of *governing*, that is of consolidating its power and, in order to do this, of forming around itself a party and a privileged class with a common interest in it remaining permanently in power.

But now a new factor has appeared in history, which is represented by anarchists. Now there are revolutionaries who want to make a revolution with distinctly anti-government aims, therefore the establishment of a new government would face an obstacle that has never been found in the past.

Furthermore, past revolutionaries, wanting to make the social transformation they desired by means of laws, addressed the masses solely for the basic cooperation they could provide, and did not bother to give them a consciousness of what could be wished for and of the way in which they could fulfil their aspirations. So, naturally, the people, liable to self-destruction, themselves asked for a government, when there was a need to reorganise everyday social life.

On the other hand, with our propaganda and with workers' organisations we aim to form a conscious minority that knows what it wants to do, and which, intermingled with the masses, could provide for the immediate necessities and take those initiatives, which on other occasions were waited for from the government.

CESARE: Very well; but since you will only be a minority, and probably in many parts of the country you will not have any influence, a government will be established just the same and you will have to endure it.

GIORGIO: It is more than likely that a government will succeed in establishing itself; but whether we'll have to put up with it... that we will see.

Note this well. In past revolutions there was a primary concern to create a new government and the orders were awaited from this government. And in the meantime things remained substantially the same, or rather the economic conditions of the masses deteriorated because of the interruption of industry and commerce. Therefore people quickly became tired of it all; there was a hurry to get it over and done with and hostility from the public towards those who wanted to prolong the state of insurrection for too long. And so whoever demonstrated a capacity to restore order, whether it be a soldier of fortune, or a shrewd and daring politician, or possibly the some sovereign who had been thrown out, would be welcomed with popular applause as a peacemaker and a liberator.

We on the contrary understand revolution very differently. We want the social transformation at which the revolution aims to begin to be realised from the first insurrectional act. We want the people immediately to take possession of existing wealth; declare gentlemen's mansions public domain, and provide through voluntary and active initiatives minimal housing for all the population, and at once put in hand through the work of the constructor's association, the construction of as many new houses as is considered necessary. We want to make all the available food products community property and organise, always through voluntary operations and under the true control of the public, an equal distribution for all. We want the agricultural workers to take possession of uncultivated land and that of the landowners and by so doing convince the latter that now the land belongs to the labourers. We want workers to remove themselves from the direction of the owners and continue production on their own account and for the public. We would like to establish at once exchange relationships among the diverse productive associations and the different communes; — and at the same

time we want to burn, to destroy, all the titles and all material signs of individual property and state domination. In short, we want from the first moment to make the masses feel the benefits of the revolution and so disturb things that it will be impossible to re-establish the ancient order.

CESARE: And do you think that all of this is easy to carry out?

GIORGIO: No, I'm well aware of all the difficulties that we will be confronting; I clearly foresee that our programme cannot be applied everywhere at once, and that where applied it will give rise to a thousand disagreements and a thousand errors. But the single fact that there are people who want to apply it and will try and to apply it wherever possible, is already a guarantee that at this point the revolution can no longer be a simple political transformation and must put in train a profound change in the whole of social life.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie did something similar in the great French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, although to a smaller degree, and the ancien régime could not re-establish itself notwithstanding the Empire and the Restoration.

CESARE: But if, despite all your good or bad intentions, a government establishes itself, all your projects will go up in the air, and you would have to submit to the law like everybody else.

GIORGIO: And why is that?

That a government or governments will establish itself is certainly very probable. There are a lot of people that like to command and a lot more that are disposed to obey!

But it is very difficult to see how this government could impose itself, make itself accepted and become a regular government, if there are enough revolutionaries in the country, and they have learned enough to involve the masses in preventing a new government finding a way to become strong and stable.

A government needs soldiers, and we will do everything possible to deny them soldiers; a government needs money and we will do all we can to ensure that no one pays taxes and no one gives it credit.

There are some municipalities and perhaps some regions in Italy where revolutionaries are fairly numerous and the workers quite prepared to proclaim themselves autonomous and look after their own affairs, refusing to recognise the government and to receive its agents or to send representatives to it.

These regions, these municipalities will be centres of revolutionary influence, against which any government will be impotent, if we act quickly and do not give it time to arm and consolidate itself.

CESARE: But this is civil war!

GIORGIO: It may very well be. We are for peace, we yearn for peace... but we will not sacrifice the revolution to our desire for peace. We will not sacrifice it because only by this route can we reach a true and permanent peace.

FIFTEEN

GINO [*Worker*]: I have heard that you discuss social questions in the evenings and I have come to ask, with the permission of these gentlemen, a question of my friend Giorgio.
Tell me, is it true that you anarchists want to remove the police force.

GIORGIO: Certainly. What! Don't you agree? Since when have you become a friend of police and *carabinieri*?

GINO: I am not their friend, and you know it. But I'm also not the friend of murderers and thieves and I would like my goods and my life to be guarded and guarded well.

GIORGIO : And who guards you from the guardians?...
Do you think that men become thieves and murderers without a reason?
Do you think that the best way to provide for one's own security is by offering up one's neck to a gang of people who, with the excuse of defending us, oppress us and practice extortion, and do a thousand times more damage than all the thieves and all the murderers? Wouldn't it be better to destroy the causes of evil, doing it in such a way that everybody could live well, without taking bread from the mouths of others, and doing it in a way so that everyone could educate and develop themselves and banish from their hearts the evil passions of jealousy, hatred and revenge?

GINO: Come off it! Human beings are bad by nature, and if there weren't laws, judges, soldiers and *carabinieri* to hold us in check, we would devour each other like wolves.

GIORGIO: If this was the case, it would be one more reason for not giving anybody the power to command and to dispose of the liberty of others. Forced to fight against everybody, each person with average strength, would run the same risk in the struggle and could alternatively be a winner and a loser: we would be savages, but at least we could enjoy the relative liberty of the jungle and the fierce emotions of the beasts of prey. But if voluntarily we should give to a few the right and the power to impose their will, then since, according to you, the simple fact of being human predisposes us to devour one another, it will be the same as voting ourselves into slavery and poverty.

You are deceiving yourself however, my dear friend. Humanity is good or bad according to circumstances. What is common in human beings is the instinct for self-preservation, and an aspiration for well-being and for the full development of one's own powers. If in order to live well you need to treat others harshly, only a few will have the strength necessary to resist the temptation. But put human beings in a society of their fellow creatures with conditions conducive to well-being and development, and it will need a great effort to be bad, just as today it needs great effort to be good.

GINO: All right, it may be as you say. But in the meantime while waiting for social transformation the police prevent crimes from being committed.

GIORGIO: Prevent?!

GINO: Well then, they prevent a great number of crimes and bring to justice the perpetrators of those offences which they were not able to prevent.

GIORGIO: Not even this is true. The influence of the police on the number and the significance of crimes is almost nothing. In fact, however much the organisation of the magistrature, of the police and the prisons is reformed, or the number of policemen decreased or increased, while the economic and moral conditions of the people remain unchanged, delinquency will remain more or less constant.

On the other hand, it only needs the smallest modification in the relations between proprietors and workers, or a change in the price of wheat

and other vitally necessary foods, or a crisis that leaves workers without work, or the spreading of our ideas which opens new horizons for people making them smile with new hope, and immediately the effect on the increase or decrease in the number of crimes will be noted.

The police, it is true, send delinquents to prison, when they can catch them; but this, since it does not prevent new offences, is an evil added to an evil, a further unnecessary suffering inflicted on human beings.

And even if the work of the police force succeeds in putting off a few offences, that would not be sufficient, by a long way, to compensate for the offences it provokes, and the harassment to which it subjects the public.

The very function they carry out makes the police suspicious of, and puts them in conflict with, the whole of the public; it makes them hunters of humanity; it leads them to become ambitious to discover some "great" cases of delinquency, and it creates in them a special mentality that very often leads them to develop some distinctly anti-social instincts. It is not rare to find that a police officer, who should prevent or discover crime, instead provokes it or invents it, to promote their career or simply to make themselves important and necessary.

GINO: But, then the policemen themselves would be the same as criminals! Such things occur occasionally, the more so that police personnel are not always recruited from the best part of the population, but in general...

GIORGIO: Generally the background environment has an inexorable effect, and professional distortion strikes even those who call for improvement.

Tell me: what can be, or what can become of the morals of those who are obligated by their salaries, to persecute, to arrest, to torment anyone pointed out to them by their superiors, without worrying whether the person is guilty or innocent, a criminal or an angel?

GINO: Yes... but...

GIORGIO: Let me say a few words about the most important part of the question; in other words, about the so called offences that the police undertake to restrain or prevent.

Certainly among the acts that the law punishes there are those that are and always will be bad actions; but there are exceptions which result from the state of brutishness and desperation to which poverty reduces people.

Generally however the acts that are punished are those which offend against the privileges of the upper-class and those that attack the government in the exercise of its authority. It is in this manner that the police, effectively or not, serve to protect, not society as a whole, but the upper-class, and to keep the people submissive.

You were talking of thieves. Who is more of a thief than the owners who get wealthy stealing the produce of the workers' labour?

You were talking about murderers. Who is more of a murderer than capitalists who, by not renouncing the privilege of being in command and living without working, are the cause of dreadful privations and the premature death of millions of workers, let alone a continuing slaughter of children?

These thieves and murderers, far more guilty and far more dangerous than those poor people who are pushed toward crime by the miserable conditions in which they find themselves, are not a concern of the police: quite the contrary!...

GINO: In short, you think that once having made the revolution, humanity will become, out of the blue, so many little angels. Everybody will respect the rights of others; everybody will wish the best for one another and help each other; there will be no more hatreds, nor jealousies... an earthly paradise, what nonsense?!

GIORGIO: Not at all. I don't believe that moral transformation will come suddenly, out of the blue. Of course, a large, an immense change will take place through the simple fact that bread is assured and liberty gained; but all the bad passions, which have become embodied in us through the age-old influence of slavery and of the struggle between people, will not disappear at a stroke. There will still be for a long time those who will feel tempted to impose their will on others with violence, who will wish to exploit favourable circumstances to create privileges for themselves, who will retain an aversion for work inspired by the conditions of slavery in which today they are forced to labour, and so on.

GINO: So even after the revolution we will have to defend ourselves against criminals?

GIORGIO: Very likely. Provided that those who are then considered criminals are not those who rebel rather than dying of hunger, and still less those who attack the existing organisation of society and seek to replace it with a better one; but those who would cause harm to everyone,

those who would encroach on personal integrity, liberty and the well being of others.

GINO: All right, so you will always need a police force.

GIORGIO: But not at aII. It would truly be a great piece of foolishness to protect oneself from a few violent people, a few idlers and some degenerates, by opening a school for idleness and violence and forming a body of cut-throats, who will get used to considering citizens as jail bait and who will make hunting people their principal and only occupation.

GINO: What, then!

GIORGIO: Well, we will defend ourselves.

GINO: And do you think that is possible?

GIORGIO: Not only do I think it is possible that the people will defend themselves without delegating to anyone the special function of the defence of society, but I am sure it is the only effective method.
Tell me! If tomorrow someone who is sought after by the police comes to you, will you denounce him?

GINO: What, are you mad? Not even if they were the worst of all murderers. What do you take me for a police officer?!

GIORGIO: Ah! Ah! The police officers' occupation must be a terrible one, if anyone with self-respect thinks themselves dishonoured by taking it on, even when they think it to be useful and necessary to society.
And now, tell me something else. If you happened upon a sick person with an infectious disease or a dangerous madman would you take them to hospital?

GINO: Certainly.

GIORGIO: Even by force?

GINO: But... You must understand! Leaving them free could harm a lot of people!

GIORGIO: Now explain to me, why do you take great care not to denounce a murderer, while you would take a madman or a plague-stricken person to hospital, if necessary by force?

GINO: Well... first of all I find being a policeman repugnant, while I consider it a honourable and humanitarian thing to care for the sick.

GIORGIO: Well you can already see that the first effect of the police is to make the citizens wash their hands of social defence, and actually place them on the side of those who rightly or wrongly the police persecute.

GINO: It is also that when I take someone to hospital I know that I am leaving them in the hands of the doctors, who try to cure them, so that they can be at liberty as soon as they no longer are a threat to other people. In every case, even if incurable, they will try to alleviate suffering and will never inflict a more severe treatment than is strictly necessary. If doctors did not do their duties, the public would make them do so, because it is well understood that people are kept in hospital to be cured and not to be tormented.

While on the contrary, if one delivers someone into the hands of the police, they seek from ambition to try to condemn them, little caring whether they are guilty or innocent; then they put them in prison, where, instead of seeking their improvement through loving care, they do everything to make them suffer, make them more embittered, then release them as an even more dangerous enemy to society than they were before they went to prison.

But, this could be changed through a radical reform.

GIORGIO: In order to reform, my dear fellow, or to destroy an institution, the first thing is not to establish a corporation interested in preserving it.

The police (and what I say of the police applies also to the magistrates) in carrying out their profession of sending people to prison and beating them up when there is an opportunity, will always end up considering themselves as being opposed to the public. They furiously pursue the true or assumed delinquent with the same passion with which a hunter pursues game, but at the same time it is in the interests of the police that there are more delinquents because they are the reason for their existence, and the greater the number and the harmfulness of delinquents grow, so does the power and the social importance of the police!

In order for crime to be treated rationally, in order to seek for its causes and really do everything possible to eliminate it, it is necessary for this task to be entrusted to those who are exposed to and suffer the consequences of crime, in other words the whole public, and not those to whom the existence of crime is a source of power and earnings.

GINO: Oh! It could be you are right. Until next time.

SIXTEEN

PIPPO [*War cripple*]: I've had enough! Please allow me to tell you that I am amazed, I would almost say indignant that, even though you possess the most diverse opinions, you seem to agree in ignoring the essential question, that of the fatherland, that of securing the greatness and the glory of our Italy.

Prospero, Cesare, Vincenzo, *and everyone present, other than* Giorgio and Luigi (a young socialist), *uproariously protest their love for Italy and* Ambrogio *says on everyone's behalf*: In these discussions we have not talked of Italy, as we have not talked of our mothers. It wasn't necessary to talk about what was already understood, of what is superior to any opinion, to any discussion. Please Pippo do not doubt our patriotism, not even that of Giorgio.

GIORGIO: But, no; my patriotism can certainly be doubted, because I am not a patriot.

PIPPO: I already guessed that: you are one of those that shouts *down with Italy* and would like to see our country humiliated, defeated, dominated by foreigners.

GIORGIO: But not at all. These are the usual slanders with which our opponents try to deceive the people in order to prejudice them against us. I don't rule out there being people who in good faith believe this humbug, but this is the result of ignorance and a lack of understanding.
We don't want of domination of any kind and therefore we could not want Italy to be dominated by other countries, just like we don't want Italy to dominate others.

We consider the whole world as our homeland, all humanity as our brothers and sisters; therefore, for us, it would simply be absurd to wish to damage and humiliate the country in which we live; in which we have our dear ones, whose language we speak best, the country that gives us the most and to which we give the most in terms of the exchange of work, ideas and affection.

AMBROGIO: But this country is the fatherland, that you continually curse.

GIORGIO: We don't curse our fatherland, or anybody else's country. We curse patriotism, that which you call patriotism, which is national arrogance, that is the preaching of hatred towards other countries, a pretext for pilling people against people in deadly wars, in order to serve sinister capitalist interests and the immoderate ambitions of sovereigns and petty politicians.

VINCENZO: Easy, easy.
You are right if you talk of the *patriotism* of a great many capitalists and a great many monarchists for whom the love of the country is really a pretext: and, like yourself, I despise and loathe those who don't risk anything for the country and in the name of the fatherland enrich themselves on the sweat and the blood of workers and honest folk from all classes. But there are people who are really patriots, who have sacrificed and are ready to sacrifice everything, their possessions, liberty and their life for their country.
You know that republicans have always been fired by the highest patriotism, and that have always met their responsibilities squarely.

GIORGIO: I always admire those who sacrifice themselves for their ideas, but this does not stop me seeing that the ideals of the republicans and the sincere patriots, who are certainly found in all parties, have at this point become out-of-date and only serve to give to governments and capitalists a way of masking their real aims with ideals and swaying the unconscious masses and the enthusiastic youth.

VINCENZO: What do you mean, out-of-date?! The love of one's country is a natural sentiment of the human heart and will never become out-of-date.

GlORGIO: That which you call love of one's country is the attachment to that country to which you have strongest moral ties and that provides

the greatest certainty of material well being; and it is certainly natural and will always remain so, at least until civilization has progressed to the point where every person will *de facto* find their country in any part of the world. But this has nothing in common with the myth of the "fatherland" which makes you consider other people as inferior, which makes you desire the domination of your country over others, which prevents you from appreciating and using the work of so-called foreigners, and which makes you consider workers as having more in common with their bosses and the police of their country than with workers from other countries, with whom they share the same interests and aspirations.

After all, our international, cosmopolitan feelings are still being developed, as a continuation of the progress already made. You may feel more attached to your native village or to your region for a thousand sentimental and material reasons, but it does not mean that you are parochial or tied to your region: you pride yourself on being Italian and, if the necessity arises, you would place the general interests of Italy above regional or local interests. If you believe that broadening the notion of one's country from commune to nation has been on advance, why stop there and not embrace the entire world in a general love for the human kind and in a fraternal co-operation among all people?

Today the relations between countries, the exchanges of raw materials and of agricultural and industrial products are already such that a country which wished to isolate itself from others, or worse, place itself in conflict with others, would condemn itself to an attenuated existence and complete and utter failure. Already there is an abundance of men who because of their relationships, because of their kind of studies and work, because of their economic position, consider themselves and truly are citizens of the world.

Moreover, can't you see that everything that is great and beautiful in the world is of a global and supranational character. Science is international, so too is art, so too is religion which, in spite of its lies, is a great demonstration of humanity's spiritual activity. As Signor Ambrogio would say, rights and morals are universal, because everyone tries to extend their own conceptions to every human being. Any new truth discovered in whatever part of the world, any new invention, any ingenious product of the human brain is useful, or ought to be useful to the whole of humanity.

To return to isolation, to rivalry and hatred between peoples, to persist in a narrow-minded and misanthropic patriotism, would mean placing oneself outside the great currents of progress which press humanity toward a future of peace and fraternity, it would be to place oneself outside and against civilization.

CESARE: You always speak of peace and fraternity; but let me ask you a practical question. If, for instance, the Germans or the French should come to Milan, Rome or Naples to destroy our artistic monuments, and to kill or oppress our fellow-countrymen, what would you do? Would you be unmoved?

GIORGIO: Whatever are you saying? I would certainly be extremely distressed and would do whatever I could to prevent it. But, note this well, I would be equally distressed and, being able, would do everything to prevent Italians going to destroy, oppress and kill in Paris, Vienna, Berlin... or in libya.#

CESARE: Really *equally* distressed?

GIORGIO: Perhaps not in practice. I would feel worse for the wrongdoings done in Italy because it's in Italy I have more friends, I know Italy better, and so my feelings would be deeper and more immediate. But this does not mean that the wrongdoings committed in Berlin would be less wrong than those committed in Milan.

It is as if they were to kill a brother, a friend. I would certainly suffer more than I would had they killed someone I did not know: but this does not mean that the killing of someone unknown to me is less criminal than the killing of a friend.

PIPPO: All right. But what did you do to stop a possible invasion of Milan by the Germans?

GIORGIO: I didn't do anything. Actually my friends and I did all we could to keep out of the fray; because we were not able to do what would have been useful and necessary.

PIPPO: What do you mean?

GIORGIO: It's obvious. We found ourselves in a position of having to defend the interests of our bosses, our oppressors, and having to do so by killing some of our brothers, the workers of other countries driven to the slaughterhouse, just as we were, by their bosses and oppressors. And we refused to be used as an instrument of those who are our real enemy, that is our bosses.

If, firstly, we had been able to free ourselves from our internal enemies, then we would have been able to defend our country and not the

country of the bosses. We could have offered a fraternal hand to the foreign workers sent against us, and if they had not understood and had wished to continue to serve their masters by opposing us, we would have defended ourselves.

AMBROGIO: You are only concerned with the interests of the workers, with the interests of your class, without understanding that the nation is above class interests. There are some sentiments, some traditions, some interests that unite all the people of the same nation, despite differences in their conditions and all the antagonisms of class.

And then again, there is the pride in one's roots. Aren't you proud of being Italian, of belonging to a country that has given civilization to the world and even today, in spite of everything, is at the forefront of progress?

How is it you do not feel the need to defend Latin civilization against Teutonic barbarity?

GIORGIO: Please, let's not talk about civilization and the barbarism of this or that country.

I could immediately say to you that if the workers are not able to appreciate your "Latin civilization" the fault is yours, the fault of the bourgeoisie that took away from the workers the means to educate themselves. How can you expect someone to be passionate about something about which you have kept them ignorant?

But, stop misleading us. Would you have us believe that the Germans are more barbaric than anyone else, when for years you yourself were admiring anything coming from Germany? If tomorrow political conditions change and capitalist interests are oriented differently, you would once again say that Germans are at the forefront of civilization and that the French or the English are barbarians.

What does this mean? If one's country finds itself more advanced than another it has the duty to spread its civilization, to help its fellows who are backward and not profit from its superiority to oppress and exploit... because any abuse of power leads to corruption and decadence.

AMBROGIO : But, in any case, you do at least respect national solidarity which must be superior to any class competition.

GIORGIO: I understand. It is this pretence of national solidarity which particularly interests you, and it is this which what we struggle against in particular. National solidarity means solidarity between capitalists

and workers, between oppressors and oppressed, in other words acquiescence by the oppressed to their state of subjection.

The interests of the workers are opposed to those of the employers, and when in special circumstances they find themselves temporarily in agreement, we seek to make them into antagonists, given that human emancipation and all future progress depend upon the struggle between workers and owners, that must lead to the complete disappearance of exploitation and oppression of one person by another.

You still try to deceive workers with the lies of nationalism: but in vain. The workers have already understood that the workers of all countries are their comrades, and that all capitalists and all governments, domestic or foreign, are their enemies.

And with this I will say good evening. I know that I haven't convinced neither the magistrates nor the proprietors who have listened to me. But, perhaps I haven't spoken in vain for Pippo, Vincenzo and Luigi, who are proletarians like myself.

SEVENTEEN

LUIGI [*a socialist*]: Since everyone here has stated their opinion, allow me to state mine?

These are just some of my own ideas, and I don't want to expose myself to the combined intolerance of the bourgeoisie and the anarchists.

GIORGIO: I am amazed that you speak like that.

Since we are both workers we can, and must, consider ourselves friends and comrades, but you seem to believe that anarchists are the enemies of socialists. On the contrary, we are their friends, their collaborators.

Even if many notable socialists have attempted and still attempt to oppose socialism to anarchism, the truth is that, if socialism means a society or the aspiration for a society in which humans live in fellowship, in which the well being of all is a condition for the well being of each, in which no one is a slave or exploited and each person has the means to develop to the maximum extent possible and to enjoy in peace all the benefits of civilization and of communal work, not only are we socialists, but we have the right to consider ourselves the most radical and consistent socialists.

After all, even Signor Ambrogio, who has sent so many of us to gaol, knows we were the first to introduce, to explain and to propagate socialism; and if little by little we ended up abandoning the name and calling ourselves simply anarchists, it was because there arose alongside us another school, dictatorial and parliamentary, which managed to prevail and to make of socialism such a hybrid and accommodating thing that it was impossible to reconcile with our ideals and our methods a doctrine that was repugnant to our nature.

LUIGI: In fact, I have understood your arguments and we certainly agree on many things, especially the criticisms of capitalism.

But we don't agree on everything, firstly because anarchists only believe in revolution and renounce the more civilized means of struggle that have replaced those violent methods which were perhaps necessary once upon a time — and secondly, because even if we should conclude with a violent revolution, it would be necessary to put in power a new government to do things in an orderly manner and not leave everything to arbitrary actions and the fury of the masses.

GIORGIO: Well, let's discuss this further. Do you seriously believe that it is possible radically to transform society, to demolish privileges, throw out the government, expropriate the bourgeoisie without resorting to force?

I hope that you don't delude yourself that owners and rulers will surrender without resistance, without making use of the forces at their disposal, and can somehow be persuaded to play the part of sacrificial victims. Otherwise, ask these gentlemen here who, if they could, would get rid of you and me with great pleasure and with great speed.

LUIGI: No, I don't have any of those illusions.

But since today the workers are the great majority of the electorate and have the right to vote in administrative and political elections, it seems to me that, if they were conscious and willing, they could without too much effort put in power people whom they could trust, socialists and, if you want, even some anarchists, who could make good laws, nationalise the land and workshops and introduce socialism.

GIORGIO: Of course, if the workers were conscious and committed!

But if they were developed enough to be able to understand the causes of their problems and the remedies to them, if they were truly determined to emancipate themselves, then the revolution could be made with little, or no, violence, and the workers themselves could do what-

ever they wanted and there wouldn't be a need to send to parliament and into government people, who, even if they didn't allow themselves to become intoxicated and corrupted by the allurements of power, as unfortunately happens, find themselves unable to provide for social needs and do what the electors expect of them.

But unfortunately the workers, or the great majority of them, are not conscious or committed; they live in conditions that do not admit of the possibility of emancipating themselves morally unless there is firstly an improvement in their material condition. So, the transformation of society must come about through the initiative and the work of those minority groups who due to fortunate circumstances have been able to elevate themselves above the common level — numerical minorities which end up being the predominant force capable of pulling along with them the backward masses.

Look at the facts, and soon you will see that, precisely because of the moral and material conditions in which the proletariat finds itself, the bourgeoisie and the government always succeed in obtaining from the parliament what suits them. That's why they concede universal suffrage and allow it to function. If they should see any danger of being legally dispossessed they would be the first to depart from legality and violate what they call the popular will. Already they do this on every occasion the laws by mistake work against them.

LUIGI: You say this, but in the meantime we see the number of socialist deputies is always increasing. One day they will be the majority and...

GIORGIO: But, can't you see that when socialists enter parliament, they immediately become tamed and, from being a danger, they become collaborators, and supporters of the prevailing order? After all, by sending socialists to parliament we render a service to the bourgeoisie because the most active, able and popular people are removed from the heart of the masses and transported into a bourgeoisie environment.

Furthermore, as I've already told you, when the socialist members of parliament really become a danger, the government will drive them from parliament at bayonet point and suppress universal suffrage.

LUIGI: It may seem like this to you, because you always see things in terms of a world in extreme crisis.

The reverse is true. The world moves a little at a time by gradual evolution.

It is necessary for the proletariat to prepare to take over from the bourgeoisie, by educating itself, by organising itself, by sending its representatives to the bodies which decide and make laws; and when it becomes mature it will take everything into its own hands, and the new society to which we aspire will be established.

In all civilized countries the number of socialist deputies is increasing and naturally so too is their support among the masses.

Some day they will certainly be the majority, and if then the bourgeoisie and its government will not give in peacefully and attempts violently to suppress the popular will, we will reply to violence with violence.

It is necessary to take time. It is useless and damaging wanting to try to force the laws of nature and of history.

GIORGIO: Dear Luigi, the laws of nature do not need defenders: they produce respect for themselves. People laboriously discover them and make use of their discovery either to do good or evil; but beware of accepting as natural laws the social facts that interested parties (in our case the economists and sociologists who defend the bourgeoisie) describe as such.

As far as the "laws of history", they are formulated after history is made. let us first of all make history.

The world moves slowly, or quickly, it goes forward or backward, as the result of an indefinite number of natural and human factors, and it is an error to feel confident of a continuous evolution which always moves in the same direction.

At present, it is certainly true that society is in a continuous, slow evolution; but evolution in essence means change, and if some changes are those that lead in the right direction for us, that favour the elevation of humanity towards a superior ideal of community and of liberty, others instead reinforce the existing institutions or drive back and annul the progress already realised.

While people remain in opposition to each other, no gains are secure, no progress in social organisation can be considered definitely won.

We must utilize and encourage all the elements of progress and combat, obstruct and try to neutralise regressive and conservative forces.

Today the fate of humanity depends on the struggle between workers and exploiters and whatever conciliation there is between the two hostile classes, whatever collaboration there is between capitalists and workers, between government and people, carried out with the intention or on the pretext of toning down social disputes, only serves to favour the class of oppressors, to reinforce the tottering institutions and, what

is worse still, to separate from the masses the most developed proletarian elements and turn them into a new privileged class with an interest shared with the barons of industry, finance and politics, in maintaining the great majority of the people in a state of inferiority and subjection.

You talk of evolution, and seem to think that necessarily and inevitably, whether people want it or not, humanity will arrive at socialism, in other words a society created for the equal interest of all, in which the means of production belong to all, where everybody will be a worker, where everybody will enjoy with equal rights all the benefits of civilisation.

But this is not true. Socialism will come about if the people want it and do what is necessary to achieve it. Because otherwise it is possible that, instead of socialism, a social situation could eventuate in which the differences between people are greater and more permanent, in which humanity becomes divided into two different races, the gentlefolk and the servants, with an intermediate class which would serve to insure through the combination of intelligence and brute force, the dominance of one over the other — or there could simply be a continuation of the present state of continuous struggle, an alternation of improvements and deteriorations, of crises and periodic wars.

Actually, I would say that if we were to leave things to their natural course, evolution would probably move in the opposite direction to the one we desire, it would move towards the consolidation of privileges, towards a stable equilibrium established in favour of the present rulers, because it is natural that strength belongs to the strong, and who starts the contest with certain advantages over their opponent will always gain more advantages in the course of the struggle.

LUIGI: Perhaps you are right; this is precisely why we need to utilize all the means at our disposal: education, organisation and political struggle...

GIORGIO: All means, yes, but all the means that lead to our goal.

Education, certainly. It is the first thing that is needed, because if we don't act on the minds of individuals, if we don't awaken their consciences, if we don't stimulate their senses, if we don't excite their will, progress will not be possible. And by education I don't so much mean book-learning, although, it too is necessary, but not very accessible to proletarians, rather, the education that one acquires through conscious contact with society, propaganda, discussions, concern with public issues, the participation in the struggles for one's own and others' improvement.

This education of the individual is necessary and would be sufficient to transform the world if it could be extended to all.

But, unfortunately, that is not possible. People are influenced, dominated, one could almost say shaped, by the environment in which they live; and when the environment is not suitable one can progress only by fighting against it. At any given moment there are only a limited number of individuals who are capable, either because of inherited capacities or because of specially favourable circumstances, of elevating themselves above the environment, reacting against it and contributing to its transformation.

This is why it is a conscious minority that must break the ice and violently change the exterior circumstances.

Organisation: A great and necessary thing, provided that it is used to fight the bosses and not to reach an agreement with them.

Political struggle: Obviously, provided by it we mean struggle against the government and not co-operation with the government.

Pay close attention. If you want to improve the capitalist system and make it tolerable, and hence sanction and perpetuate it, then certain accommodations, certain amounts of collaboration may be acceptable; but if you truly want to overthrow the system, then you must clearly place yourself outside and against the system itself.

And since the revolution is necessary and since whichever way you look at it the problem will only be solved through revolution, don't you think we should prepare ourselves from now on, spiritually and materially, instead of deluding the masses and giving them the hope of being able to emancipate themselves without sacrifices and bloody struggles.

LUIGI: That's fine. Let's suppose that you are right and that revolution is inevitable. There are also a lot of socialists who say the same. But it will always be necessary to establish a new government to direct and organise the revolution.

GIORGIO: Why? If among the masses there isn't a sufficient number of revolutionaries, manual and non-manual workers, capable of providing for the needs of the struggle and of life, the revolution will not be made, or if made, will not triumph. And if a sufficient number exist what is a government good for other than to paralyse popular initiative and in substance to choke the very revolution itself.

In fact, what can a parliamentary or a dictatorial government do?

It must first of all think of and insure its own existence as a government, in other words establish an armed force to defend itself against its opponents and to impose its own will on recalcitrants; then it would

have to inform itself, study, try to conciliate the wills and the interests in conflict and hence make laws… which most likely will not please anybody.

In the meantime it is necessary to go on living. Either property will have *de facto* passed into the hands of the workers, and then, because it is necessary to provide for everyday necessities, these same workers would have to solve the problems of everyday life without awaiting the decisions of the rulers, the latter thus… can now only declare their own uselessness as rulers and blend in with the crowd as workers.

Or property will have remained in the hands of proprietors, then, they, holding and disposing of wealth as they please, would remain the true arbiters of social life, and would make sure that the new government composed of socialists (not anarchists, because anarchists do not want to govern nor be governed) will either submit to the wishes of the bourgeoisie or be quickly swept away.

I will not dwell on this because I have to go and I don't know when I will be returning. It will be a while before we see each other.

Think about what I have said — I hope that when I will return I will find a new comrade.

Goodbye to you all.

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Translated by Paul Nursey-Bray with the assistance of Piero Ammirato.
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Revolution in Practice

Errico Malatesta

October 1922

At the meeting held in Bienne (Switzerland) on the fiftieth anniversary of the Saint Imier Congress, comrade Bertoni and I expressed some ideas that comrade Colomer did not like. So much so that he wrote on the Paris *Libertaire* that he is sure those ideas contrast the most lively tendencies of the contemporary anarchist movement. Had the comrades of Germany, Spain, Russia, America, etc. been present at that meeting, he writes, they would have got moved and nearly indignant ("émus et presque indigné"), as he himself did.

In my opinion, comrade Colomer slightly overstates his knowledge of the real tendencies of anarchism. In any case, it is an improper use of language, at the least, to talk about "indignation" when the matter is a discussion where everyone honestly tries to contribute to the clarification of ideas in the best interest of the common goal. Anyway, it is better to keep discussing in a friendly manner, as we did in Bienne.

Bertoni will certainly defend his ideas on the *Réveil*; I will do the same on *Umanità Nova*, as will Colomer on the *Libertaire*. Other comrades, I hope, will join in the discussion; and it will be to the benefit of all, if everyone takes care not to alter the contradictor's thought in the translations imposed by the diversity of languages. And it does not hurt to hope that nobody will get indignant if he hears something that he had never thought of.

Two topics were discussed in Bienne: "Relationships between syndicalism and anarchism", and "Anarchist action at the outbreak of an insurrection". I will come back to the former topic some other time and unhurriedly, as the readers of *Umanità Nova* must already know what I think about the issue. I will presently explain what I said on the latter topic.

* * *

We want to make the revolution as soon as possible, taking advantage of all the opportunities that may arise.

With the exception of a small number of "educationists", who believe in the possibility of raising the masses to the anarchist ideals before the material and moral conditions in which they live have changed, thus deferring the revolution to the time when all will be able to live anarchically, all anarchists agree on this desire of overthrowing the current regimes as soon as possible: as a matter of fact, they are often the only ones who show a real wish to do so.

However, revolutions did, do and will happen independently from the anarchists' wish and action; and since anarchists are just a small minority of the population and anarchy cannot be made by force and violent

imposition by few, it is clear that past and future revolutions were not and will not possibly be anarchist revolutions.

In Italy two years ago the revolution was about to break out and we did all we could to make that happen. We treated like traitors the socialists and the unionists, who stopped the impetus of the masses and saved the shaky monarchical regime on the occasion of the riots against the high cost of living, the strikes in Piedmont, the Ancona uprising, the factory occupations.

What would we have done if the revolution had broken out for good?

What will we do in the revolution that will break out tomorrow?

What did our comrades do, what could and should they have done in the recent revolutions occurred in Russia, Bavaria, Hungary and elsewhere?

We cannot make anarchy, at least not an anarchy extended to all the population and all the social relations, because no population is anarchist yet, and we cannot either accept another regime without giving up our aspirations and losing any reason for existence, as anarchists. So, what can and must we do?

This was the problem being discussed in Bienne, and this is the problem of greatest interest in the present time, so full of opportunities, when we could suddenly face situations that require for us to either act immediately and unhesitatingly, or disappear from the battle ground after making the victory of others easier.

It was not a matter of depicting a revolution as we would like it, a truly anarchist revolution as would be possible if all, or at least the vast majority of the people living in a given territory were anarchist. It was a matter of seeking the best that could be done in favour of the anarchist cause in a social upheaval as can happen in the present situation.

The authoritarian parties have a specific program and want to impose it by force; therefore they aspire to seizing the power, regardless of whether legally or illegally, and transforming society their way, through a new legislation. This explains why they are revolutionary in words and often also in intentions, but they hesitate to make a revolution when the opportunities arise; they are not sure of the acquiescence, even passive, of the majority, they do not have sufficient military force to have their orders carried out over the whole territory, they lack devoted people with skills in all the countless branches of social activity... therefore they are always forced to postpone action, until they are almost reluctantly pushed to the government by the popular uprising. However, once in power, they would like to stay there indefinitely, therefore they try to slow down, divert, stop the revolution that raised them.

On the contrary, we have indeed an ideal we fight for and would like to see realized, but we do not believe that an ideal of freedom, of justice, of love can be realized through the government violence.

We do not want to get in power neither we want anyone else to do so. If we cannot prevent governments from existing and being established, due to our lack of strength, we strive, and always will, to keep or make such governments as weak as possible. Therefore we are always ready to take action when it comes to overthrowing or weakening a government, without worrying too much (I say 'too much', not 'at all') about what will happen thereafter.

For us violence is only of use and can only be of use in driving back violence. Otherwise, when it is used to accomplish positive goals, either it fails completely, or it succeeds in establishing the oppression and the exploitation of the ones over the others.

The establishment and the progressive improvement of a society of free men can only be the result of a free evolution; our task as anarchists is precisely is to defend and secure the evolution's freedom.

Here is our mission: demolishing, or contributing to demolish any political power whatsoever, with all the series of repressive forces that support it; preventing, or trying to prevent new governments and new repressive forces from arising; in any case, refraining from ever acknowledging any government, keeping always fighting against it, claiming and requiring, even by force if possible, the right to organize and live as we like, and experiment the forms of society that seem best to us, as long as they do not prejudice the others' equal freedom, of course.

Beyond this struggle against the government imposition that bears the capitalistic exploitation and makes it possible; once we had encouraged and helped the masses to seize the existing wealth and particularly the means of production; once the situation is reached whereby no one could impose his wishes on others by force, nor take away from any man the product of his labour, we could then only act through propaganda and by example.

Destroy the institution and the machinery of existing social organizations? Yes, certainly, if it is a question of repressive institutions; but these are, after all, only a small part of the complex of social life. The police, the army, the prisons, and the judiciary are potent institutions for evil, which exercise a parasitic function. Other institutions and organizations manage, for better or for worse, to guarantee life to mankind; and these institutions cannot be usefully destroyed without replacing them by something better.

The exchange of raw material and goods, the distribution of foodstuffs, the railways, postal services and all public services administered

by the State or by private companies, have been organized to serve monopolistic and capitalist interests, but they also serve real needs of the population. We cannot disrupt them (and in any case the people would not in their own interests allow us to) without reorganizing them in a better way. And this cannot be achieved in a day; nor as things stand, have we the necessary abilities to do so. We are delighted therefore if in the meantime, others act, even with different criteria from our own.

Social life does not admit of interruptions, and the people want to live on the day of the revolution, on the morrow and always.

Woe betide us and the future of our ideas if we shouldered the responsibility of a senseless destruction that compromised the continuity of life!

* * *

During the discussion of such topics, the issue of money, which is of the greatest importance, was raised in Bienne.

It is customary in our circles to offer a simplistic solution to the problem by saying that money must be abolished. And this would be the solution if it were a question of an anarchist society, or of a hypothetical revolution to take place in the next hundred years, always assuming that the masses could become anarchist and communist before the conditions under which we live had been radically changed by a revolution.

But today the problem is complicated in quite a different way.

Money is a powerful means of exploitation and oppression; but it is also the only means (apart from the most tyrannical dictatorship or the most idyllic accord) so far devised by human intelligence to regulate production and distribution automatically.

For the moment, rather than concerning oneself with the abolition of money, perhaps one should seek a way to ensure that money truly represents the useful work performed by its possessors.

Anyway, let us come to the immediate practice, which is the issue that was actually discussed in Bienne.

Let us assume that a successful insurrection takes place tomorrow. Anarchy or no anarchy, the people must go on eating and providing for all their basic needs. The large cities must be supplied with necessities more or less as usual.

If the peasants and carriers, etc., refuse to supply goods and services for nothing, and demand payment in money which they are accustomed to considering as real wealth, what does one do? Oblige them by force? In which case we might as well wave goodbye to anarchism and to any possible change for the better. Let the Russian experience serve as a lesson.

And so?

The comrades generally reply: But the peasants will understand the advantages of communism or at least of the direct exchange of goods for goods.

This is all very well; but certainly not in a day, and the people cannot stay without eating for even a day.

I did not mean to propose solutions.

What I do want to do is to draw the comrades' attention to the most important questions which we shall be faced with in the reality of a revolutionary morrow.

Let the comrades contribute their clarifications on the issue; and do not let friend and comrade Colomer be outraged or indignant.

If these issues are novel for him, getting so much scared by novelties is not like an anarchist.

Further Thoughts on Revolution in Practice

My latest article on this topic drew the attention of many comrades and procured me numerous questions and remarks.

Perhaps I was not clear enough; perhaps I also disturbed the mental habits of some, who love to rest on traditional formulas more than tormenting their brain, and are bothered by anything that forces them to think.

In any case I will try to make myself clearer, and I will be happy if those who consider what I say quite heretical will enter the discussion and contribute to define a practical program of action, which can be used as a guide in the next social upheavals.

So far our propagandists have been mainly concerned with criticizing the present society and demonstrating the desirability and possibility of a new social order based on free agreement, in which everyone could find the conditions for the greatest material, spiritual and intellectual development, in brotherhood and solidarity and with the fullest freedom.

They strove above all to inflame with the idea of a condition of individual and social perfection, called 'utopia' by some and 'ideal' by us; they did a good and necessary work, because they set the goal to which our efforts must aim, but they (we) were insufficient and almost indifferent with respect to the search of ways and means that can lead us to that goal. We were very much concerned with the necessity of radically destroying the bad social institutions, but we did not pay enough atten-

tion to the positive actions that we needed to take, or let others take, on the day and the morrow of the destruction, in order for individual and social life to be able to continue in the best possible way. We thought, or we acted as we thought, that things would fix themselves, by natural law, without any will consciously intervening to direct the efforts towards the goal previously set. This is probably the reason of the relative unsuccess of our work.

It is about time to look upon the problem of social transformation in all its broad complexity, and try to examine more closely the practical side of the issue. The revolution could happen tomorrow, and we must enable ourselves to act within it in the most effective possible way.

Since at this transitory time the triumphant reaction prevents us from doing much to broaden our propaganda among the masses, let us use our time to examine more closely and clarify our ideas about what is to be done, while we try, by wishes and deeds, to hasten the time of acting and accomplishing.

* * *

I based my remarks upon two principles:

First: Anarchy cannot be made by force. Anarchist communism, applied in its full breadth and with all its beneficial effects, is only possible when it is understood and wanted by large popular masses that embrace all the elements necessary to creating a society superior to the present one. One can conceive selected groups, whose members live in relationships of voluntary and free association among them and with similar groups, and it will be good that such groups exist, and it will be our task to create them as experiments and examples; however, such groups will not constitute the anarchist communist society, yet, rather they will be cases of devotion and sacrifice for the cause, until they succeed in involving all or large part of the population. Therefore, on the morrow of the violent revolution, if it has to come to a violent revolution, it will not be a matter of accomplishing anarchist communism, but one of setting off towards anarchist communism.

Second: the conversion of the masses to anarchy and communism — and even to the mildest form of socialism — is not possible as long as the present social and economic conditions last. Since such conditions, which keep workers slave for the benefit of those privileged, are preserved and perpetuated by brutal force, it is necessary to change them violently through the revolutionary action of conscious minorities. Hence, if the principle is granted that anarchy cannot be made by force, without the conscious will of the masses, the revolution cannot be made to

accomplish anarchy directly and immediately, but rather to create the conditions that make a rapid evolution towards anarchy possible.

The following sentence is often repeated: "The revolution will be anarchist or will not be at all". This claim may look very "revolutionary", very "anarchist"; however, it is actually nonsense, when it is not a means, worse than reformism itself, to paralyze good will and induce people to keep quiet, to peacefully put up with the present, waiting for the forthcoming heaven.

Evidently, either "the anarchist revolution" will be anarchist or it will not be at all. However, did not revolutions happen in the world, when the possibility of an anarchist society was yet to be conceived? Won't any revolution ever happen again until the masses are converted to anarchism? As we fail to convert to anarchism the masses brutalized by their life conditions, should we give up any revolution and submit to living in a monarchical and bourgeois regime?

The truth is that the revolution will be what it may be, and our task is to speed it up as much as possible and strive to make it as radical as possible.

* * *

However, let us be quite clear.

The revolution will not be anarchist if the masses are not anarchist, as unfortunately it is presently the case. However, we are anarchists, we must remain anarchists and act like anarchists before, during and after the revolution.

Without the anarchists, without the anarchists' activity, if the anarchists accepted any kind of government whatsoever and any so called transition constitution, the next revolution would bear new forms of oppression and exploitation even worse than the present, instead of marking a progress of freedom and justice and the start of a complete liberation of mankind. At best, it would only bring about a shallow improvement, largely delusive and by no means adequate to the effort, the sacrifices, the pain of a revolution, such as expected in a more or less near future.

After contributing to overthrow the present regime, our task is to prevent, or try to prevent a new government form arising; failing to do that, at least we must struggle to prevent the new government from being exclusive and concentrating all social power in its hands; it must remain weak and unsteady, it must not be able to have enough military and financial strength, and it must be acknowledged and obeyed as little as

possible. In any case, we anarchist should never take part in it, never acknowledge it, and always fight against it as we fight against the present government.

We must stay with the masses, encourage them to act directly, to take possession of the production means and organize the work and the product distribution, to occupy housing, to perform public services without waiting for resolutions or commands from higher-ranking authorities. We must contribute to such work with all our forces, and to that end we must immediately start to engage in acquiring as many skills as possible.

However, as we must uncompromisingly oppose all restraining and repressing bodies and everything that tends to forcibly hinder the will of the people and the freedom of minorities, so we must take care not to destroy those things and disorganize those useful services that we cannot replace in a better way.

We must remember that violence, unfortunately necessary to resist violence, is no use to build anything good: it is the natural enemy of freedom, the procreator of tyranny, therefore it must be kept within the limits of strict necessity.

Revolution is useful, necessary to tear down the violence of governments and privileged people; however, the establishment of a society of free people can only result from a free evolution.

It is the task of the anarchists to watch over the freedom of evolution, which is always at risk as long as men are thirsty for domination and privileges.

* * *

A question of great, vital importance, nay, the question that must stand out on the revolutionaries' minds, is food.

There was a time when the prejudice spread out that industrial and farm products were so abundant that it would be possible to live on stockpiles for long, postponing the organization of production to a later time, after the accomplishment of the social transformation. It made an inviting propaganda item to be able to say: "People are out of everything, while everything abounds and the warehouses overflow with every good; people die of starvation and wheat rots in the granaries". Things were made so much simpler. An expropriation was enough to secure the well-being of everyone: there would be plenty of time to deal with all the rest.

Unfortunately, quite the opposite is true.

Everything is running out, and a bad harvest, or some major disaster, is enough to cause a complete shortage and the impossibility to provide

to everyone's needs, even within the limits imposed by capitalism to the popular masses.

It is true that the production capacity has become almost unlimited, thanks to the means nowadays provided by mechanics, chemistry, scientific work organization, etc.

However, it's one thing to be able to produce and another to have produced. Owners and capitalists do not sufficiently exploit the means of production they own, and prevent other from exploiting them, partly for incompetence and indifference, and largely because of a system that often makes profits decrease with abundance and increase with shortage.

Because of the disorder inherent in the individualistic economy, there are unbalances between one place and the other, overproduction crises, etc., but all in all the general production is always on the verge of famine.

As a consequence, we must bear in mind that on the morrow of the revolution we shall be faced with the danger of hunger. This is not a reason for delaying the revolution, because the state of production will, with minor variations, remain the same, so long as the capitalist system lasts.

But it is a reason for us to pay attention to the problem and of how in a revolutionary situation, to avoid all waste, to preach the need for reducing consumption to a minimum, and to take immediate steps to increase production, especially of food.

This is a topic about which some essays already exist, but which needs to be investigated more thoroughly, mainly focusing on the technical means to bring the quantity of food to the level of needs.[6]

Retrieved on March 4th, 2009 from dwardmac.pitzer.edu

From Umanità Nova, n. 191, October 7, 1922 and Umanità Nova, n. 192, October 14, 1922

[6] I will soon come back to the issue of money.

What is to be done?

Errico Malatesta

August 1922

"What is to be done?" is the question that, more or less intensely, always troubles the minds of all men struggling for an ideal, and urgently comes back in moments of crisis, when a failure, a disillusionment induces one to re-examine the tactics adopted, to criticize possible errors and to seek more effective means. Comrade *Outcast* is right to bring up the question again and invite the comrades to think and decide about what to do.

Today our situation is difficult, and even dreadful in some areas. However, he who was anarchist before, remains anarchist after all; although we have been weakened by many defeats, we have also gained a valuable experience, which will increase our effectiveness, if only we are able to treasure it. The defections occurred on our side, which were actually rare, help us after all, because they rid us of weak and unreliable persons.

So, what is to be done?

I am not going to dwell upon the unrest occurred abroad against the Italian reaction. Certainly we can only expect benefits from anything that helps the proletariat of the world to know about the true conditions of Italy and the incredible infamies that have been committed and keep being committed by the bourgeoisie cops in order to stifle and destroy any emancipatory movement. We just read about an international rally of protest against fascism, that took place in New York on the 18th of the current month — and we are sure that our friends and those who have a sense of freedom and justice will do whatever they can in America, England, France, Spain, etc.

However, we are mainly interested in what is to be done here in Italy, because this is what is to be done by us. Although it is good to take into

account all the auxiliary forces, it is very important not to rely too much on others, and seek our well being in ourselves and our own work.

In recent years we have approached the different avantgard parties with a view to joint action, and we have always been disappointed. Must we for this reason isolate ourselves, or take refuge from *impure* contacts and stand still trying to move only when we have the necessary strength and in the name of our complete programme?

I think not.

Since we cannot make the revolution by ourselves, i.e. our forces alone are not sufficient to attract and mobilize the large masses necessary to win, and since, no matter how long one waits, the masses cannot become anarchist before the revolution has started, and we will necessarily remain a relatively small minority until we can try out our ideas in the revolutionary practice, by denying our cooperation to others and by postponing the action until we are strong enough to act by ourselves, we would practically end up encouraging sluggishness, despite the high-sounding words and the radical intentions, and refusing to get started, with the excuse of jumping to the end with one big leap.

I know very well — if I had not known for a long time I would have learnt recently — that we anarchists are alone in wishing the revolution for good and as soon as possible, except some individuals and groups that champ the bit of the authoritarian parties' discipline, but remain in those parties in the hope that their leaders will resolve someday upon ordering a general action. However, I also know that the circumstances are often stronger than the individuals' will, and one day or another our cousins from all different sides will have to resolve upon venturing the final struggle, if they do not want to ignominiously die as parties and make a present to the monarchy of all their ideas, their traditions, their best sentiments. Today they could be induced to that by the necessity of defending their freedom, their goods, their life.

Therefore we should always be prepared to support those who are prepared to act, even if it carries with it the risk of later finding ourselves alone and betrayed.

But in giving others our support, that is, in always trying to use the forces at the disposal of others, and taking advantage of every opportunity for action, we must always be ourselves and seek to be in a position to make our influence felt and count at least in direct proportion to our strength.

To this end it is necessary that we should be agreed among ourselves and seek to co-ordinate and organize our efforts as effectively as possible.

Let others keep misunderstanding and slandering our goals, for reasons we do not want to qualify. All comrades that seriously want to take action will judge what is better for them to do.

At this time, as at any time of depression and stagnation, we are afflicted by a recrudescence of hair-splitting tendencies; some people enjoy discussing whether we are a party or a movement, whether we have to associate into unions or federations, and hundreds of other similar trifles; perhaps we will hear again that "groups can have neither a secretary nor a cashier, but they have to entrust one comrade to deal with the group's correspondence and another to keep the money". Hair-splitters are capable of anything; but let practical men see to taking action, and let hair-splitters in good faith, and those in bad faith above all, stew in their own juice.

Let anyone do whatever they like, associate with whoever they like, but let them act.

No person of good faith and common sense can deny that acting effectively requires agreeing, uniting, organizing.

Today the reaction tends to stifle any public movement, and obviously the movement tends to "go underground", as the Russian used to say.

We are reverting to the necessity of a secret organization, which is fine.

However, a secret organization cannot be all and cannot include all.

We need to preserve and increase our contact with the masses, we need to look for new followers by propagandizing as much as possible, we need to keep in the movement all the individuals unfit for a secret organizations and those who would jeopardize it by being too well-known. One must not forget that the persons most useful to a secret organization are those whose beliefs are unknown to the adversaries, and who can work without being suspected.

Therefore, in my opinion, nothing that exists should be undone. Rather, it is a matter of adding something more; something with such characteristics as to respond to the current needs.

Let nobody wait for someone else's initiative; let anyone take the initiatives they deem appropriate in their place, in their environment, and then try, with due precautions, to connect their own to others' initiatives, to reach the general agreement that is necessary to a valid action.

We are in a time of depression, it is true. However, history is moving fast nowadays: let us get ready for the events to come.

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From Umanità Nova, n. 185, August 26, 1922. Reply to an article by “Outcast”

Democracy and Anarchy

Errico Malatesta

March 1924

The rampant dictatorial governments in Italy, Spain and Russia, which arouse such envy and longing among the more reactionary and timid parties across the world, are supplying dispossessed ‘democracy’ with a sort of new virginity. Thus we see the creatures of the old regimes, well-accustomed to the wicked art of politics, responsible for repression and massacres of working people, re-emerging — where they do not lack the courage — and presenting themselves as men of progress, seeking to capture the near future in the name of liberation. And, given the situation, they could even succeed.

There is something to be said for the criticisms made of democracy by dictatorial regimes, and the way they expose the vices and lies of democracy. And I remember that anarchist, Hermann Sandomirski, a Bolshevik fellowtraveller with whom we had bittersweet contact at the time of the Geneva conference, and who is now trying to couple Lenin with Bakunin, no less; I say I remember Sandomirski who in order to defend the Russian regime dragged out his Kropotkin to demonstrate that democracy is not the best imaginable form of social structure. His method of reasoning, as a Russian, put me in mind and I think I told him so — of the reasoning made by some of his compatriots when, in response to the indignation of the civilised world at the Tsar’s stripping, flogging and hanging of women, they argued that if men and women were to have equal rights they should also accept equal responsibilities. Those supporters of prison and the scaffold remembered the rights of women only when they could serve as a pretext for new outrages ! Thus dictatorships oppose democratic governments only when they discover that there is a form of government which leaves even greater room for despotism and tyranny for those who manage to seize power.

For me there is no doubt that the worst of democracies is always preferable, if only from the educational point of view, than the best of dictatorships. Of course democracy, so-called government of the people, is a lie; but the lie always slightly binds the liar and limits the extent of his arbitrary power. Of course the 'sovereign people' is a clown of a sovereign, a slave with a papier-maché crown and sceptre.

But to believe oneself free, even when one is not, is always better than to know oneself to be a slave, and to accept slavery as something just and inevitable.

Democracy is a lie, it is oppression and is in reality, oligarchy; that is, government by the few to the advantage of a privileged class. But we can still fight it in the name of freedom and equality, unlike those who have replaced it or want to replace it with something worse.

We are not democrats for, among other reasons, democracy sooner or later leads to war and dictatorship. Just as we are not supporters of dictatorships, among other things, because dictatorship arouses a desire for democracy, provokes a return to democracy, and thus tends to perpetuate a vicious circle in which human society oscillates between open and brutal tyranny and a the and lying freedom.

So, we declare war on dictatorship and war on democracy. But what do we put in their place?

Not all democrats are like those described above — hypocrites who are more or less aware that in the name of the people they wish to dominate the people and exploit and oppress them.

There are many, especially among the young republicans, who have a serious belief in democracy and see it as the means of obtaining full and complete freedom of development for all. These are the young people we should like to disabuse, persuade not to mistake an abstraction, 'the people', for the living reality, which is men and women with all their different needs, passions and often contradictory aspirations.

It is not the intention here to repeat our critique of the parliament system and all the means thought up to have deputies who really do represent the will of the people; a critique which, after fifty years anarchist propaganda is at last accepted and even repeated by those writers who most affect to despise our ideas (e.g. Political Science Senator Gaetano Mosca).

We will limit ourselves to inviting our young friends to use greater precision of language, in the conviction that once the phrases are dissected they themselves will see how vacuous they are.

'Government of the people' no, because this presupposes what could never happen — complete unanimity of will of all the individuals that make up the people.

It would be closer to the truth to say, ‘government of the majority of the people.’ This implies a minority that must either rebel or submit to the will of others.

But it is never the case that the representatives of the majority of people are all of the same mind on all questions; it is therefore necessary to have recourse again to the majority system and thus we will get closer still to the truth with ‘government of the majority of the elected by the majority of the electors.’

Which is already beginning to bear a strong resemblance to minority government.

And if one then takes into account the way in which elections are held, how the political parties and parliamentary groupings are formed and how laws are drawn up and voted and applied, it is easy to understand what has already been proved by universal historical experience: even in the most democratic of democracies it is always a small minority that rules and imposes its will and interests by force.

Therefore, those who really want ‘government of the people’ in the sense that each can assert his or her own will, ideas and needs, must ensure that no-one, majority or minority, can rule over others; in other words, they must abolish government, meaning any coercive organisation, and replace it with the free organisation of those with common interests and aims.

This would be very simple if every group and individual could live in isolation and on their own, in their own way, supporting themselves independently of the rest, supplying their own material and moral needs.

But this is not possible, and if it were, it would not be desirable because it would mean the decline of humanity into barbarism and savagery.

If they are determined to defend their own autonomy, their own liberty, every individual or group must therefore understand the ties of solidarity that bind them to the rest of humanity, and possess a fairly developed sense of sympathy and love for their fellows, so as to know how voluntarily to make those sacrifices essential to life in a society that brings the greatest possible benefits on every given occasion.

But above all it must be made impossible for some to impose themselves on, and sponge off, the vast majority by material force.

Let us abolish the gendarme, the man armed in the service of the despot, and in one way or another we shall reach free agreement, because without such agreement, free or forced, it is not possible to live.

But even free agreement will always benefit most those who are intellectually and technically prepared. We therefore recommend to our friends and those who truly wish the good of all, to study the most ur-

gent problems, those that will require a practical solution the very day that the people shake off the yoke that oppresses them.

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Note on Medicine and Anarchism

Errico Malatesta

May 1924

Medicine... and Anarchism. — Under this title, in the editorial mail of our issue n. 5, we published a note by which we refused the invitation of some comrades to make propaganda in favour of certain methods of treatment conflicting with science and the commonly accepted medical practice.

This fact upset comrade N. Cuneo from New York. Though acknowledging that *Pensiero e Volontà* is not the right place for medical discussions (in fact, he is not among those who urged us to that propaganda), in the April 15 issue of *Libero Accordo* he stands up for the "natural treatment", i.e. a treatment without drugs, which is said to be making great progress, and to have been acknowledged and legalized in many states of the american Union.

Evidently we could not make ourselves understood.

We did not mean to ban any method; we only wanted to declare our incompetence, our ignorance... and also, to some extent, to remind some comrades of their own ignorance.

There is among us a tendency to consider true, good and fine everything that appears under the agreeable cloak of revolt against the accepted "truths", especially if supported by people who are, or call themselves, anarchists. This shows a deficiency of that spirit of investigation and criticism that should be maximally developed in anarchists.

It is alright to regard none of the achievements of human intelligence as definitive, and to aspire always to new discoveries, new advances; however, one has to mind that the new is not always better than the old, and that being anarchist does not involve being gifted with infallibility.

Medicine is an eminently experimental science, and a young science still at its beginning, so to speak. Therefore it is good to look with sym-

pathy upon any honest and enlightened attempt to open new avenues. However, it does not seem exaggerated to require that those who want to criticize and oppose the old methods know what such methods are and what facts are known in their favour or against them. In other words, we simply require that those who want to talk about a subject take first the trouble of studying it. Therefore, if there are comrades who feel they have enough competence to discuss medical subjects, let them do so, but do not let them ask us to talk about what we ignore.

After all, we know good doctors who profess anarchist ideas; however, they do not talk about anarchy when they do science, or they only talk about it when a scientific issue becomes a social issue, i.e. when they note that the present social organization hinders the advances of medicine, and prevents them from being applied for the benefit of all mankind.

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Editorial mail from Pensiero e Volontà, n. 9, May 10, 1924

Note to the article “Individualism and Anarchism” by Adamas

Errico Malatesta

August 1924

Adamas’ reply to my article in n. 13 shows that I did not express my thought well, and induces me to add some clarifications.

I claimed that “individualist anarchism and communist anarchism are the same, or nearly so, in terms of moral motivations and ultimate goals”.

I know that one could counter my claim with hundreds of texts and plenty of deeds of self-proclaimed individualist anarchists, which would demonstrate that individualist anarchist and communist anarchist are separated by something of a moral abyss.

However, I deny that that kind of individualists can be included among anarchists, despite their liking for calling themselves so.

If anarchy means non-government, non-domination, non-oppression by man over man, how can one call himself anarchist without lying to himself and the others, when he frankly claims that he would oppress the others for the satisfaction of his *Ego*, without any scruple or limit, other than that drawn by his own strength? He can be a rebel, because he is being oppressed and he fights to become an oppressor, as other nobler rebels fight to destroy any kind of oppression; but he sure cannot be anarchist. He is a would-be bourgeois, a would-be tyrant, who is unable to accomplish his dreams of dominion and wealth by his own strength and by legal means, and therefore he approaches anarchists to exploit their moral and material solidarity.

Therefore, I think the question is not about “communists” and “individualists”, but rather about anarchists and non-anarchists. And we, or at least many of us, were quite wrong in discussing a certain kind

of alleged "anarchist individualism" as if it really was one of the various tendencies of anarchism, instead of fighting it as one of the many disguises of authoritarianism.

However, *Adamas* says, "if one strips individualist anarchism of all that is not anarchist, there is no individualist anarchism whatsoever left". We disagree about this.

Morally, anarchism is sufficient unto itself; but to be translated into facts it needs concrete forms of material life, and it is the preference for one or other form which differentiates the various anarchist schools of thought.

In the anarchist milieu, communism, individualism, collectivism, mutualism and all the intermediate and eclectic programmes are simply the ways considered best for achieving freedom and solidarity in economic life; the ways believed to correspond more closely with justice and freedom for the distribution of the means of production and the products of labour among men.

Bakunin was an anarchist, and he was a collectivist, an outspoken enemy of communism because he saw in it the negation of freedom and, therefore, of human dignity. And with Bakunin, and for a long time after him, almost all the Spanish anarchists were collectivists (*collective property of soil, raw materials and means of production, and assignment of the entire product of labour to the producer, after deducting the necessary contribution to social charges*), and yet they were among the most conscious and consistent anarchists.

Others for the same reason of defence and guarantee of liberty declare themselves to be individualists and they want each person, to have as individual property the part that is due to him of the means of production and therefore the free disposal of the products of his labour.

Others invent more or less complicated system of mutuality. But in the long run it is always the searching for a more secure guarantee of freedom which is the common factor among anarchists, and which divides them into different schools.

We are communist, because we believe that a way of social life based on brotherhood, with no oppressed nor oppressors, can be better accomplished through a freely established solidarity and a free cooperation in the interest of all, aiming at the fullest possible satisfaction of everyone's needs rather than the *right* to a higher or lower recompense.

We believe that the distribution of the natural means of production and the determination of the exchange value of things, both necessary in every system except communism, could be hardly be accomplished without struggle and injustice, which might eventually end up in the establishment of new forms of authority and governments. On the other

hand, we readily admit the danger involved in trying to apply communism before its desire and awareness be deep-rooted, and to a larger extent than allowed by the objective conditions of production and social relations: a parasitic bureaucracy could arise, which would centralize everything in its hands and become the worst of governments.

Therefore we remain communist in our sentiment and aspiration, but we want to leave freedom of action to the experimentation of all ways of life that can be imagined and desired.

For us, it is necessary and sufficient that everyone have complete freedom, and nobody can monopolize the means of production and live on someone else's work.

* * *

Adamas also talks about the necessity of "an organized, homogeneous, continuative anarchist movement, connected for a common action of struggle and demand". He also says that our propaganda in deeds must not consist of "postponing action, initiative, organization, etc. until all who call themselves anarchists agree about what is to be done. Rather, we ourselves who already agree, must take immediate action, according to our general and tactical programs, without refraining from it for a silly fear of hurting the feelings of the dissenters belonging to the various fractions and tendencies".

I perfectly agree with him; however, I believe he is wrong when he thinks the "individualists" are to blame if what he wishes has not been done so far, or it has been done insufficiently and badly.

In my opinion, the blame is on a state of mind of the anarchists, deriving from wrong ideas spread since the origins of our movement, which made them balk at any practical plan of action. Such errors depend on a kind of *natural providentialism*, which led to believe that human events happen automatically, *naturally*, without preparation, without organization, without preconceived plans. Just as many among us think the revolution will come by itself, when *the time is ripe*, by the spontaneous action of the masses, so they also think that after the revolution the *popular spontaneity* will suffice for everything and that there is no need to foresee and prepare anything. This is the reason of the wrongs pointed out by *Adamas*, not the "individualists", which have always been a very small minority among us, after all, generally without credit and without influence.

The maxim "anarchy is the natural order", which, in my opinion, is diametrically opposed to the truth, was not invented by the individualists!

Anyway, we can talk about this some other time.

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Gradualism

Errico Malatesta

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In the course of those polemics which arise among anarchists as to the best tactics for achieving, or approaching the creation of an anarchist society - and they are useful, and indeed necessary arguments when they reflect mutual tolerance and trust and avoid personal recriminations - it often happens that some reproach others with being *gradualists*, and the latter reject the term as if it were an insult.

Yet the fact is that, in the real sense of the word and given the logic of our principles, we are all gradualists. And all of us, in whatever different ways, have to be.

It is true that certain words, especially in politics, are continually changing their meaning and often assume one that is quite contrary to the original, logical and natural sense of the term.

Thus the word *possibilist*. Is there anyone of sound mind who would seriously claim to want the impossible? Yet in France the term became the special label of a section of the Socialist Party who were followers of the former anarchist, Paul Brousse - and more willing than others to renounce socialism in pursuit of an impossible cooperation with bourgeois democracy.

Such too is the case with the word *opportunist*. Who actually wants to be an in-opportunist, and as such renounce what opportunities arise? Yet in France the term *opportunist* ended up by being applied specifically to followers of Gambetta[7] and is still used in the pejorative sense to mean a person or party without ideas or principles and guided by base and short-term interests.

[7] Léon Gambetta was a prominent republican politician of the French Third Republic, until his death in 1882.

The same is true of the word *transformist*. Who would deny that everything in the world and in life evolves and changes? Who today is not a "transformer?" Yet the word was used to describe the corrupt and short-term policies pioneered by the Italian Depretis.[8]

It would be a good thing to put a brake on the habit of attributing to words a meaning that is different from their original sense and which gives rise to such confusion and misunderstanding. But how to do it is another matter, particularly when the change in meaning is a deliberate tactic on the part of politicians to disguise their iniquitous purposes behind fine words.

Maybe it is true, therefore, that the word *gradualist*, as applied to anarchists, could end up in fact describing those who use the excuse of doing things gradually, as and when they become possible, and in the last analysis do nothing at all - either that or move, if they move at all, in a contrary direction to anarchy. If this is the case the term has to be rejected. Yet the real sense of gradualism remains the same: everything in nature and in life changes by degrees, and this is no less true of anarchy. It can only come about little by little.

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As I was saying earlier, anarchism is of necessity gradualist.

Anarchy can be seen as absolute perfection, and it is right that this concept should remain in our minds, like a beacon to guide our steps. But quite obviously, such an ideal cannot be attained in one sudden leap from the hell of the present to the longed-for heaven of the future.

The authoritarian parties, by which I mean those who believe it both moral and expedient to impose a given social order by force, may hope - vain hope! - that when they come to power they can, by using the laws, decrees... and *gendarmes* subject everybody indefinitely to their will.

But such hopes and wishes are inconceivable for the anarchists, since anarchists seek to impose nothing but respect for liberty and count on the force of persuasion and perceived advantages of free cooperation for the realisation of their ideals.

This does not mean I believe (as, by way of polemic, one unscrupulous and ill-informed reformist paper had me believe) that to achieve anarchy we must wait till *everyone* becomes an anarchist. On the contrary, I believe - and this is why I'm a revolutionary - that under present conditions only a small minority, favoured by special circumstances, can manage to conceive what anarchy is. It would be wishful thinking to

[8] Agostino Depretis was Italian prime minister nine times between 1876 and 1887. During his uninterrupted premiership from 1881 to 1887 he changed his cabinet five times, supported by majorities that shifted from the Left to the Right, based on short-term convenience rather than long-term programmes.

hope for a general conversion before a change actually took place in the kind of environment in which authoritarianism and privilege now flourish. It is precisely for this reason that I believe in the need to organise for the bringing about of anarchy, or any rate that degree of anarchy which would become gradually feasible, as soon as a sufficient amount of freedom has been won and a nucleus of anarchists somewhere exists that is both numerically strong enough and able to be self-sufficient and to spread its influence locally. I repeat, we need to organise ourselves to apply anarchy, or that degree of anarchy which becomes gradually possible.

Since we cannot convert everybody all at once and the necessities of life and the interests of propaganda do not allow us to remain in isolation from the rest of society, ways need to be found to put as much of anarchy as possible into practice among people who are not anarchist or who are only sympathetic.

The problem, therefore, is not whether there is a need to proceed gradually but to seek the quickest and sincerest way that leads to the realisation of our ideals.

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Throughout the world today the way is blocked by privileges conquered, as a result of a long history of violence and mistakes, by certain classes which in addition to an intellectual and technical superiority which they enjoy as a result of these privileges, also dispose of armed forces recruited among the subject classes and use them when they think necessary without scruples or restraint.

That is why revolution is necessary. Revolution destroys the state of violence in which we live now, and creates the means for peaceful development towards ever greater freedom, greater justice and greater solidarity.

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What should the anarchists' tactics be before, during and after the revolution?

No doubt censorship would forbid us to say what needs to be done before the revolution, in order to prepare for it and to carry it out. In any case, it is a subject badly handled in the presence of the enemy. It is, however, valid to point out that we need to remain true to ourselves, to spread the word and to educate as much as possible, and avoid all compromise with the enemy and to hold ourselves ready, at least in spirit, to seize all opportunities that might arise.

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And during the revolution?

Let me begin by saying, we can't make the revolution on our own; nor would it be desirable to do so. Unless the whole of the country is behind it, together with all the interests, both actual and latent, of the people, the revolution will fail. And in the far from probable case that we achieved victory on our own, we should find ourselves in an absurdly untenable position: either because, by the very fact of imposing our will, commanding and constraining, we would cease to be anarchists and destroy the revolution by our authoritarianism; or because, on the contrary, we would retreat from the field, leaving others, with aims opposed to our own, to profit from our effort.

So we should act together with all progressive forces and vanguard parties to attract the mass of the people into the movement and arouse their interest, allowing the revolution - of which we would form a part, among others - to yield what it can.

This does not mean that we should renounce our specific aims. On the contrary, we should have to keep closely united and distinctly separate from the rest in fighting in favour of our programme: the abolition of political power and expropriation of the capitalists. And if, despite our efforts, new forms of power were to arise that seek to obstruct the people's initiative and impose their own will, we must have no part in them, never give them any recognition. We must endeavour to ensure that the people refuse them the means of governing - refuse them, that is, the soldiers and the revenue; see to it that those powers remain weak... until the day comes when we can crush them once and for all.

Anyway, we must lay claim to and demand, with force if needs be, our full autonomy, and the right and the means to organise ourselves as we see fit and to put our own methods into practice.

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And after the revolution - that is after the fall of those in power and the final triumph of the forces of insurrection?

This is where gradualism becomes particularly relevant.

We must pay attention to the practical problems of life: production, trade, communications, relations between anarchist groups and those who retain a belief in authority, between communist collectives and individualists, between the city and the countryside. We must make sure to use to our advantage the forces of nature and raw materials, and that we attend to industrial and agricultural distribution - according to the conditions prevailing at the time in the various different countries - public education, childcare and care for the handicapped, health and medical services, protection both against common criminals and those, more insidious, who continue to attempt to suppress the freedom of others in the interests of individuals and parties, etc. The solutions to each prob-

lem must not only be the most economically viable ones but must respond to the imperatives of justice and liberty and be those most likely to keep open the way to future improvements. If necessary, justice, liberty and solidarity must take priority over economic benefit.

There is no need to think in terms of destroying everything in the belief that things will look after themselves. Our present civilisation is the result of thousands of years of development and has found some means of solving the problem of how millions and millions of people co-habit, often crowded together in restricted ares, and how their ever-increasing and ever more complex needs can be satisfied. Such benefits are reduced - and for the great majority of people virtually denied - due to the fact that the development has been carried out by authoritarian means and in the interests of the ruling class. But, if the rules and privileges are removed, the real gains remain: the triumphs of humankind over the adverse forces of nature, the accumulated weight of experience of past generations, the sociable habits acquired throughout the long history of human cohabitation, the proven advantages of mutual aid. It would be foolish, and besides impossible, to give up all this.

In other words, we must fight authority and privilege, while taking advantage from the benefits that civilisation has conferred. We must not destroy anything that satisfies human need however badly - until we have something better to put in its place.

Intransigent as we remain to any form of capitalist imposition or exploitation, we must be tolerant of all those social concepts that prevail in the various human groupings, so long as they do not harm the freedom and equal rights of others. We should content ourselves with gradual progress while the moral level of the people grows, and with it, the material and intellectual means available to mankind; and while, clearly, doing all we can, through study, work and propaganda, to hasten development towards ever higher ideals.

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I have here come up with more problems than solutions. But I believe I have succinctly presented the criteria which must guide us in the search and application of the solutions, which will certainly be many and vary according to circumstances. But, so far as we are concerned, they must always be consistent with the fundamental principles of anarchism: no-one orders anyone else around, no-one exploits anyone else.

It is the task of all comrades to think, study and prepare - and to do so with all speed and thoroughly because the times are "dynamic" and we must be ready for what might happen.

In *The Anarchist Revolution: Polemical Articles 1924-1931*, edited and introduced by Vernon Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1995), p.82-87. Originally published as "Gradualismo," *Pensiero e Volantà* (Rome) 2, no.12 (1 October 1925).

On Syndicalism

Errico Malatesta

1925–1926

Syndicalism and Anarchism

The relationship between the labour movement and the progressive parties is an old and worn theme. But it is an ever topical one, and so it will remain while there are, on one hand, a mass of people plagued by urgent needs and driven by aspirations — at times passionate but always vague and indeterminate — to a better life, and on the other individuals and parties who have a specific view of the future and of the means to attain it, but whose plans and hopes are doomed to remain utopias ever out of reach unless they can win over the masses. And the subject is all the more important now that, after the catastrophes of war and of the post-war period, all are preparing, if only mentally, for a resumption of the activity which must follow upon the fall of the tyrannies that still rant and rage [across Europe] but are beginning to tremble. For this reason I shall try to clarify what, in my view, should be the anarchists' attitude to labour organisations.

Today, I believe, there is no-one, or almost no-one amongst us who would deny the usefulness of and the need for the labour movement as a mass means of material and moral advancement, as a fertile ground for propaganda and as an indispensable force for the social transformation that is our goal. There is no longer anyone who does not understand what the workers' organisation means, to us anarchists more than to anyone, believing as we do that the new social organisation must not and cannot be imposed by a new government by force but must result from the free cooperation of all. Moreover, the labour movement is now an important and universal institution. To oppose it would be to become the oppressors' accomplices; to ignore it would be to put us out of reach of people's everyday lives and condemn us to perpetual powerlessness. Yet, while everyone, or almost everyone, is in agreement on the usefulness and the need for the anarchists to take an active part in the labour movement and to be its supporters and promoters, we often disagree among ourselves on the methods, conditions and limitations of such involvement.

Many comrades would like the labour movement and anarchist movement to be one and the same thing and, where they are able for instance, in Spain and Argentina, and even to a certain extent in Italy, France, Germany, etc. — try to confer on the workers' organisations a clearly anarchist programme. These comrades are known as 'anarcho-syndicalists', or, if they get mixed up with others who really are not anarchists, call themselves 'revolutionary syndicalists'. There needs to be some explanation of the meaning of 'syndicalism' If it is a question of what one

wants from the future, if, that is, by syndicalism is meant the form of social organisation that should replace capitalism and state organisation, then either it is the same thing as anarchy and is therefore a word that serves only to confuse or it is something different from anarchy and cannot therefore be accepted by anarchists. In fact, among the ideas and the proposals on the future which some syndicalists have put forward, there are some that are genuinely anarchist. But there are others which, under other names and other forms, reproduce the authoritarian structure which underlies the cause of the ills about which we are now protesting, and which, therefore, have nothing to do with anarchy. But it is not syndicalism as a social system which I mean to deal with, because it is not this which can determine the current actions of the anarchists with regard to the labour movement.

I am dealing here with the labour movement under a capitalist and state regime and the name syndicalism includes all the workers' organisations, all the various unions set up to resist the oppression of the bosses and to lessen or altogether wipe out the exploitation of human labour by the owners of the raw materials and means of production. Now I say that these organisations cannot be anarchist and that it does no good to claim that they are, because if they were they would be failing in their purpose and would not serve the ends that those anarchists who are involved in them propose. A Union is set up to defend the day to day interests of the workers and to improve their conditions as much as possible before they can be in any position to make the revolution and by it change today's wage-earners into free workers, freely associating for the benefit of all

For a union to serve its own ends and at the same time act as a means of education and ground for propaganda aimed at radical social change, it needs to gather together all workers — or at least those workers who look to an improvement of their conditions — and to be able to put up some resistance to the bosses. Can it possibly wait for all the workers to become anarchists before inviting them to organise themselves and before admitting them into the organisation, thereby reversing the natural order of propaganda and psychological development and forming the resistance organisation when there is no longer any need, since the masses would already be capable of making the revolution? In such a case the union would be a duplicate of the anarchist grouping and would be powerless either to obtain improvements or to make revolution. Or would it content itself with committing the anarchist programme to paper and with formal, unthought-out support, and bringing together people who, sheeplike, follow the organisers, only then to scatter and pass

over to the enemy on the first occasion they are called upon to show themselves to be serious anarchists?

Syndicalism (by which I mean the practical variety and not the theoretical sort, which everyone tailors to their own shape) is by nature reformist. All that can be expected of it is that the reforms it fights for and achieves are of a kind and obtained in such a way that they serve revolutionary education and propaganda and leave the way open for the making of ever greater demands. Any fusion or confusion between the anarchist and revolutionary movement and the syndicalist movement ends either by rendering the union helpless as regards its specific aims or with toning down, falsifying and extinguishing the anarchist spirit. A union can spring up with a socialist, revolutionary or anarchist programme and it is, indeed, with programmes of this sort that the various workers' programmes originate. But it is while they are weak and impotent that they are faithful to the programme — while, that is, they remain propaganda groups set up and run by a few zealous and committed men, rather than organisations ready for effective action. Later, as they manage to attract the masses and acquire the strength to claim and impose improvements, the original programme becomes an empty formula, to which no-one pays any more attention. Tactics adapt to the needs of the moment and the enthusiasts of the early days either themselves adapt or cede their place to 'practical' men concerned with today, and with no thought for tomorrow.

There are, of course, comrades who, though in the first ranks of the union movement, remain sincerely and enthusiastically anarchist, as there are workers' groupings inspired by anarchist ideas. But it would be too easy a work of criticism to seek out the thousands of cases in which, in everyday practice, these men and these groupings contradict anarchist ideas. Hard necessity? I agree. Pure anarchism cannot be a practical solution while people are forced to deal with bosses and with authority. The mass of the people cannot be left to their own devices when they refuse to do so and ask for, demand, leaders. But why confuse anarchism with what anarchism is not and take upon ourselves, as anarchists, responsibility for the various transactions and agreements that need to be made on the very grounds that the masses are not anarchist, even where they belong to an organisation that has written an anarchist programme into its constitution? In my opinion the anarchists should not want the unions to be anarchist. The anarchists must work among themselves for anarchist ends, as individuals, groups and federations of groups. In the same way as there are, or should be, study and discussion groups, groups for written or spoken propaganda in public, cooperative groups, groups working within factories and workshops, fields,

barracks, schools, etc., so they should form groups within the various organisations that wage class war. Naturally the ideal would be for everyone to be anarchist and for all organisations to work anarchically. But it is clear that if that were the case, there would be no need to organise for the struggle against the bosses, because the bosses would no longer exist.

In present circumstances, given the degree of development of the mass of the people amongst which they work, the anarchist groups should not demand that these organisations be anarchist, but try to draw them as close as possible to anarchist tactics. If the survival of the organisation and the needs and wishes of the organised make it really necessary to compromise and enter into muddied negotiations with authority and the employers, so be it. But let it be the responsibility of others, not the anarchists, whose mission is to point to the inadequacy and fragility of all improvements that are made within a capitalist society and to drive the struggle on toward ever more radical solutions. The anarchists within the unions should strive to ensure that they remain open to all workers of whatever opinion or party on the sole condition that there is solidarity in the struggle against the bosses. They should oppose the corporatist spirit and any attempt to monopolise labour or organisation. They should prevent the Unions from becoming the tools of the politicians for electoral or other authoritarian ends; they should preach and practice direct action, decentralisation, autonomy and free initiative. They should strive to help members learn how to participate directly in the life of the organisation and to do without leaders and permanent officials. They must, in short, remain anarchists, remain always in close touch with anarchists and remember that the workers' organisation is not the end but just one of the means, however important, of preparing the way for the achievement of anarchism.

April–May 1925

The Labour Movement and Anarchism

Dear comrades[9]

In your journal I came across the following sentence: 'If we must choose between Malatesta, who calls for class unity, and Rocker, who stands for a labour movement with anarchist aims, we choose our German comrade.' This is not the first time that our Spanish language press

[9] Open letter addressed to the editors of El Productor, an anarchist journal published in Barcelona — Editor.

has attributed to me ideas and intentions I do not have, and although those who wish to know what I really think can find it clearly set out in what I myself have written, I have decided to ask you to publish the following explanation of my position.

Firstly, if things were really as you present them, I too would opt for Rocker against your 'Malatesta', whose ideas on the labour movement bear little resemblance to my own. Let's get one thing clear: a labour movement with anarchist objectives is not the same thing as an anarchist labour movement. Naturally everyone desires the former. It is obvious that in their activities anarchists look to the final triumph of anarchy — the more so when such activities are carried out within the labour movement, which is of such great importance in the struggle for human progress and emancipation. But the latter, a labour movement which is not only involved in propaganda and the gradual winning over of terrain to anarchism, but which is already avowedly anarchist, seems to me to be impossible and would in every way lack the purpose which we wish to give to the movement.

What matters to me is not 'class unity' but the triumph of anarchy, which concerns everybody; and in the labour movement I see only a means of raising the morale of the workers, accustom them to free initiative and solidarity in a struggle for the good of everyone and render them capable of imagining, desiring and putting into practice an anarchist life. Thus, the difference there may be between us concerns not the ends but the tactics we believe most appropriate for reaching our common goals.

Some believe anarchists must assemble the anarchist workers, or at the least those with anarchist sympathies, in separate associations. But I, on the contrary, would like all wage-earners, whatever their social, political or religious opinions — or non-opinions — bound only in solidarity and in struggle against the bosses, to belong to the same organisations, and I would like the anarchists to remain indistinguishable from the rest even while seeking to inspire them with their ideas and example. It could be that specific circumstances involving personalities, environment or occasion would advise, or dictate the breaking up of the mass of organised workers into various different tendencies, according to their social and political views. But it seems to me in general that there should be a striving towards unity, which brings workers together in comradeship and accustoms them to solidarity, gives them greater strength for today's struggles or prepares them better for the final struggle and the harmony we shall need in the aftermath of victory.

Clearly, the unity we have to fight for must not mean suppression of free initiative, forced uniformity or imposed discipline, which would put

a brake on or altogether extinguish the movement of liberation. But it is only our support for a unified movement that can safeguard freedom in unity. Other wise unity comes about through force and to the detriment of freedom. The labour movement is not the artificial creation of ideologists designed to support and put into effect a given social and political programme, whether anarchist or not, and which can therefore, in the attitudes it strikes and the actions it takes, follow the line laid down by that programme. The labour movement springs from the desire and urgent need of the workers to improve their conditions of life or at least to prevent them getting worse. It must, therefore, live and develop within the environment as it is now, and necessarily tends to limit its claims to what seems possible at the time.

It can happen — indeed, it often happens — that the founders of workers' associations are men of ideas about radical social change and who profit from the needs felt by the mass of the people to arouse a desire for change that would suit their own goals. They gather round them comrades of like mind: activists determined to fight for the interests of others even at the expense of their own, and form workers' associations that are in reality political groups, revolutionary groups, for which questions of wages, hours, internal workplace regulations, are a side issue and serve rather as a pretext for attracting the majority to their own ideas and plans. But before long, as the number of members grows, short-term interests gain the upper hand, revolutionary aspirations become an obstacle and a danger, 'pragmatic' men, conservatives, reformists, eager and willing to enter into any agreement and accommodation arising from the circumstances of the moment, clash with the idealists and hardliners, and the workers' organisation becomes what it perforce must be in a capitalist society — a means not for refusing to recognise and overthrowing the bosses, but simply for hedging round and limiting the bosses' power.

This is what always has happened and could not happen otherwise since the masses, before taking on board the idea and acquiring the strength to transform the whole of society from the bottom up, feel the need for modest improvements, and for an organisation that will defend their immediate interests while they prepare for the ideal life of the future. So what should the anarchists do when the workers' organisation, faced with the inflow of a majority driven to it by their economic needs alone, ceases to be a revolutionary force and becomes involved in a balancing act between capital and labour and possibly even a factor in preserving the status quo?

There are comrades who say — and have done so when this question is raised — that the anarchists should withdraw and form minority

groupings. But this, to me, means condemning ourselves to going back to the beginning. The new grouping, if it is not to remain a mere affinity group with no influence in the workers' struggle, will describe the same parabola as the organisation it left behind. In the meantime the seeds of bitterness will be sown among the workers and its best efforts will be squandered in competition with the majority organisation. Then, in a spirit of solidarity, in order not to fall into the trap of playing the bosses' game and in order to pursue the interests of their own members, it will come to terms with the majority and bow to its leadership.

A labour organisation that were to style itself anarchist, that was and remained genuinely anarchist and was made up exclusively of dyed-in-the-wool anarchists could be a form — in some circumstances an extremely useful one — of anarchist grouping; but it would not be the labour movement and it would lack the purpose of such a movement, which is to attract the mass of the workers into the struggle, and, especially for us, to create a vast field for propaganda and to make new anarchists. For these reasons I believe that anarchists must remain — and where possible, naturally, with dignity and independence — within those organisations as they are, to work within them and seek to push them for ward to the best of their ability, ready to avail themselves, in critical moments of history, of the influence they may have gained, and to transform them swiftly from modest weapons of defence to powerful tools of attack. Meanwhile, of course, the movement itself, the movement of ideas, must not be neglected, for this provides the essential base for which all the rest provides the means and tools. Yours for anarchy

December 1925

Errico Malatesta

Further Thoughts on Anarchism and the Labour Movement

Obviously I am unable to make myself understood to the Spanish speaking comrades, at least as regards my ideas on the labour movement and on the role of anarchists within it. I tried to explain these ideas in an article that was published in El Productor on 8th January (an article whose heading, 'The Labour Movement and Anarchism' was wrongly translated as 'Syndicalism and Anarchism'). But from the response that I saw in those issues of El Productor that reached me I see I haven't managed to make myself understood. I will therefore return to the subject in the hope of greater success this time.

The question is this: I agree with the Spanish and South American comrades on the anarchist goals that must guide and inform all our activity. But I disagree with some as to whether the anarchist programme, or rather, label, should be imposed on workers' unions, and whether, should such a programme fail to meet with the approval of the majority, the anarchists should remain within the wider organisation, continuing from within to make propaganda and opposing the authoritarian, monopolist and collaborationist tendencies that are a feature of all workers' organisations, or to separate from them and set up minority organisations.

I maintain that as the mass of workers are not anarchist a labour organisation that calls itself by that name must either be made up exclusively of anarchists — and therefore be no more than a simple and useless duplicate of the anarchist groups — or remain open to workers of all opinions. In which case the anarchist label is pure gloss, useful only for helping to commit anarchists to the thousand and one transactions which a union is obliged to carry out in the present day reality of life if it wishes to protect the immediate interests of its members. I have come across an article by D. Abad de Santillan[10] which opposes this view... Santillan believes that I confuse syndicalism with the labour movement, while the fact is that I have always opposed syndicalism and have been a warm supporter of the labour movement.

I am against syndicalism, both as a doctrine and a practice, because it strikes me as a hybrid creature that puts its faith, not necessarily in reformism as Santillan sees it, but in classist exclusiveness and authoritarianism. I favour the labour movement because I believe it to be the most effective way of raising the morale of the workers and q because, too, it is a grand and universal enterprise that can be ignored only by those who have lost their grip on real life. At the same time I am well aware that, setting out as it does to protect the short-term interests of the workers, it tends naturally to reformism and cannot, therefore, be confused with the anarchist movement itself.

Santillan insists on arguing that my ideal is 'a pure labour movement, independent of any social tendency, and which holds its own goals within itself' When have I ever said such a thing? Short of going back — which I could easily do — to what Santillan calls the prehistoric time of my earlier activities, I recall that as far back as 1907, at the Anarchist Congress of Amsterdam, I found myself crossing swords with the

[10] Diego Abad de Santillan (1897–1983), Argentinean by birth. Active in the Spanish Civil War. Journalist and editor.

'Charter of Amiens' syndicalists and expressing my total distrust of the miraculous virtues of a 'syndicalism that sufficed unto itself'

Santillan says that a pure labour movement has never existed, does not exist and cannot exist without the influence of external ideologies and challenges me to give a single example to the contrary. But what I'm saying is the same thing! From the time of the First International and before, the parties — and I use the term in the general sense of people who share the same ideas and aims — have invariably sought to use i the labour movement for their own ends. It is natural and right that this is so, and I should like the anarchists, as I think Santillan would too, not to neglect the power of the labour movement as a means of action. The whole point at issue is whether it suits our aims, in terms of action and propaganda, for the labour organisations to be open to all workers, irrespective of philosophical or social creed, or whether they should be split into different political and social tendencies. This is a matter not of principle but of tactics, and involves different solutions according to time and place. But in general to me it seems better that the anarchists remain, when they can, within the largest possible groupings.

I wrote: 'A labour organisation that styles itself anarchist, that was and is genuinely anarchist and is made up exclusively of dyed-in-the-wool anarchists, could be a form — in some circumstances an extremely useful one — of anarchist grouping; but it would not be the labour movement and it would lack the purpose of such a movement.' This statement, which seems simple and obvious to me, dumbfounds Santillan. He throws himself at it in transcendental terms, concluding that 'if anarchism is the idea of liberty it can never work against the ends of the labour movement as all other factions do.'

Let's keep our feet firmly on the ground. What is the aim of the labour movement? For the vast majority, who are not anarchist, and who, save at exceptional times of exalted heroism, think more of the present moment than of the future, the aim of the labour movement is the protection and improvement of the conditions of the workers now and is not effective if its ranks are not swelled with the greatest possible number of wage earners, united in solidarity against their bosses. For us, and in general all people of ideas, the main reason for our interest in the labour movement is the opportunities it affords for propaganda and preparation for the future — and even this aim is lost if we gather together solely with like-minded people.

Santillan says that if the Italian anarchists had managed to destroy the General Confederation of Labour there would perhaps be no fascism today. This is possible. But how to destroy the General Confederation if the overwhelming majority of the workers are not anarchist and look to

wherever there is least danger and the greatest chance of obtaining some small benefit in the short term? I do not wish to venture into that kind of hindsight that consists in saying what would have happened if this or that had been done, because once in this realm anyone can say what they like without fear of being proved wrong. But I will allow myself one question. Since the General Confederation could not be destroyed and replaced with another equally powerful organisation, would it not have been better to have avoided schism and remain within the organisation to warn members against the somnolence of its leaders? We can learn something from the constant efforts made by those leaders to frustrate any proposal for unification and keep the dissidents at bay.

A final proof of the mistaken way in which certain Spanish comrades interpret my ideas on the labour movement: In the periodical from San Feliu de Guixol, Accion Obrera is an article by Vittorio Aurelio in which he states:

> 'I believe that my mission is to act within the unions, seeking to open from within the labour organisations an ever upward path towards the full realisation of our ideals. And whether we achieve that depends on our work, our morale and our behaviour. But we must act through persuasion, not imposition. For this reason I disagree that the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) in Spain should directly call itself anarchist, when, unfortunately, the immense majority of its members do not know what this means, what libertarian ideology is about. I wonder, if the defenders of this argument know that the members of the workers' organisation do not think or act anarchically, why is there this anxiety to impose a name, when we know full well that names alone mean nothing?'

This is precisely my point. And I wonder why, in saying this, Vittorio Aurelio finds it necessary to declare that he does not agree with Malatesta! Either my style of writing is getting too obscure or my writings are being regularly distorted by the Spanish translators.

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Neither Democrats, nor Dictators: Anarchists

Errico Malatesta

May 1926

Theoretically 'democracy' means popular government; government by all for everybody by the efforts of all. In a democracy the people must be able to say what they want, to nominate the executors of their wishes, to monitor their performance and remove them when they see fit.

Naturally this presumes that all the individuals that make up a people are able to form an opinion and express it on all the subjects that interest them. It implies that everyone is politically and economically independent and therefore no-one, to live, would be obliged to submit to the will of others.

If classes and individuals exist that are deprived of the means of production and therefore dependent on others with a monopoly over those means, the so-called democratic system can only be a lie, and one which serves to deceive the mass of the people and keep them docile with an outward show of sovereignty, while the rule of the privileged and dominant class is in fact salvaged and consolidated. Such is democracy and such it always has been in a capitalist structure, whatever form it takes, from constitutional monarchy to so-called direct rule.

There could be no such thing as a democracy, a government of the people, other than in a socialistic regime, when the means of production and of living are socialised and the right of all to intervene in the running of public affairs is based on and guaranteed by the economic independence of every person. In this case it would seem that the democratic system was the one best able to guarantee justice and to harmonise individual independence with the necessities of life in society. And so it seemed,

more or less clearly, to those who, in the era of the absolute monarchs, fought, suffered and died for freedom.

But for the fact that, looking at things as they really are, the government of all the people turns out to be an impossibility, owing to the fact that the individuals who make up the people have differing opinions and desires and it never, or almost never happens, that on any one question or problem all can be in agreement. Therefore the 'government of all the people', if we have to have government, can at best be only the government of the majority. And the democrats, whether socialists or not, are willing to agree. They add, it is true, that one must respect minority rights; but since it is the majority that decides what these rights are, as a result minorities only have the right to do what the majority wants and allows. The only limit to the will of the majority would be the resistance which the minorities know and can put up. This means that there would always be a social struggle, in which a part of the members, albeit the majority, has the right to impose its own will on the others, yoking the efforts of all to their own ends.

And here I would make an aside to show how, based on reasoning backed by the evidence of past and present events, it is not even true that where there is government, namely authority, that authority resides in the majority and how in reality every 'democracy' has been, is and must be nothing short of an 'oligarchy' — a government of the few, a dictatorship. But, for the purposes of this article, I prefer to err on the side of the democrats and assume that there can really be a true and sincere majority government.

Government means the right to make the law and to impose it on everyone by force: without a police force there is no government.

Now, can a society live and progress peacefully for the greater good of all, can it gradually adapt to ever-changing circumstances if the majority has the right and the means to impose its will by force on the recalcitrant minorities?

The majority is, by definition, backward, conservative, enemy of the new, sluggish in thought and deed and at the same time impulsive, immoderate, suggestible, facile in its enthusiasms and irrational fears. Every new idea stems from one or a few individuals, is accepted, if viable, by a more or less sizeable minority and wins over the majority, if ever, only after it has been superseded by new ideas and new needs and has already become outdated and rather an obstacle, rather than a spur to progress.

But do we, then, want a minority government?

Certainly not. If it is unjust and harmful for a majority to oppress minorities and obstruct progress, it is even more unjust and harmful

for a minority to oppress the whole population or impose its own ideas by force which even if they are good ones would excite repugnance and opposition because of the very fact of being imposed.

And then, one must not forget that there are all kinds of different minorities. There are minorities of egoists and villains as there are of fanatics who believe themselves to be possessed of absolute truth and, in perfectly good faith, seek to impose on others what they hold to be the only way to salvation, even if it is simple silliness. There are minorities of reactionaries who seek to turn back the clock and are divided as to the paths and limits of reaction. And there are revolutionary minorities, also divided on the means and ends of revolution and on the direction that social progress should take.

Which minority should take over?

This is a matter of brute force and capacity for intrigue, and the odds that success would fall to the most sincere and most devoted to the general good are not favourable. To conquer power one needs qualities that are not exactly those that are needed to ensure that justice and well-being will triumph in the world.

But I shall here continue to give others the benefit of the doubt and assume that a minority came to power which, among those who aspire to government, I considered the best for its ideas and proposals. I want to assume that the socialists came to power and would add, also the anarchists, if I am not prevented by a contradiction in terms.

This would be the worst of all?

Yes, to win power, whether legally or illegally, one needs to have left by the roadside a large part of one's ideological baggage and to have got rid of all one's moral scruples. And then, once in power, the big problem is how to stay there. One needs to create a joint interest in the new state of affairs and attach to those in government a new privileged class, and suppressing any kind of opposition by all possible means. Perhaps in the national interest, but always with freedom-destructive results.

An established government, founded on the passive consensus of the majority and strong in numbers, in tradition and in the sentiment — sometimes sincere — of being in the right, can leave some space to liberty, at least so long as the privileged classes do not feel threatened. A new government, which relies for support only on an often slender minority, is obliged through necessity to be tyrannical.

One need only think what the socialists and communists did when they came to power, either betraying their principles and comrades or by flying colours in the name of socialism and communism.

This is why we are neither for a majority nor for a minority government; neither for democracy not for dictatorship.

We are for the abolition of the gendarme. We are for the freedom of all and for free agreement, which will be there for all when no one has the means to force others, and all are involved in the good running of society. We are for anarchy.

May 1926

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About the Platform

Errico Malatesta and Nestor Makhno

1927–1929

Errico Malatesta: A Project of Anarchist Organisation (1927)

I recently happened to come across a French pamphlet (in Italy today [1927], as is known, the non-fascist press cannot freely circulate), with the title *Organisational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists (Project)*.

This is a project for anarchist organisation published under the name of a 'Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad' and it seems to be directed particularly at Russian comrades. But it deals with questions of equal interest to all anarchists; and it is, clear, including the language in which it is written, that it seeks the support of comrades worldwide. In any case it is worth examining, for the Russians as for everyone, whether the proposal put forward is in keeping with anarchist principles and whether implementation would truly serve the cause of anarchism.

The intentions of the comrades are excellent. They rightly lament the fact that until now the anarchists have not had an influence on political and social events in proportion to the theoretical and practical value of their doctrines, nor to their numbers, courage and spirit of self-sacrifice — and believe that the main reason for this relative failure is the lack of a large, serious and active organisation.

And thus far I could more or less agree.

Organisation, which after all only means cooperation and solidarity in practice, is a natural condition, necessary to the running of society; and it is an unavoidable fact which involves everyone, whether in human society in general or in any grouping of people joined by a common aim.

As human beings cannot live in isolation, indeed could not really become human beings and satisfy their moral and material needs unless they were part of society and cooperated with their fellows, it is inevitable that those who lack the means, or a sufficiently developed awareness, to organise freely with those with whom they share common interests and sentiments, must submit to the organisations set up by others, who generally form the ruling class or group and whose aim is to exploit the labour of others to their own advantage. And the age-long oppression of the masses by a small number of the privileged has always been the outcome of the inability of the greater number of individuals to agree and to organise with other workers on production and enjoyment of rights and benefits and for defence against those who seek to exploit and oppress them.

Anarchism emerged as a response to this state of affairs, its basic principle being free organisation, set up and run according to the free agreement of its members without any kind of authority; that is, without anyone having the right to impose their will on others. And it is therefore

obvious that anarchists should seek to apply to their personal and political lives this same principle upon which, they believe, the whole of human society should be based.

Judging by certain polemics it would seem that there are anarchists who spurn any form of organisation; but in fact the many, too many, discussions on this subject, even when obscured by questions of language or poisoned by personal issues, are concerned with the means and not the actual principle of organisation. Thus it happens that when those comrades who sound the most hostile to organisation want to really do something they organise just like the rest of us and often more effectively. The problem, I repeat, is entirely one of means.

Therefore I can only view with sympathy the initiative that our Russian comrades have taken, convinced as I am that a more general, more *united*, more enduring organisation than any that have so far been set up by anarchists — even if it did not manage to do away with all the mistakes and weaknesses that are perhaps inevitable in a movement like ours — which struggles on in the midst of the incomprehension, indifference and even the hostility of the majority — would undoubtedly be an important element of strength and success, a powerful means of gaining support for our ideas.

I believe it is necessary above all and urgent for anarchists to come to terms with one another and organise as much and as well as possible in order to be able to influence the direction the mass of the people take in their struggle for change and emancipation.

Today the major force for social transformation is the labour movement (union movement) and on its direction will largely depend the course events take and the objectives of the next revolution. Through the organisations set up for the defence of their interests the workers develop an awareness of the oppression they suffer and the antagonism that divides them from the bosses and as a result begin to aspire to a better life, become accustomed to collective struggle and solidarity and win those improvements that are possible within the capitalist and state regime. Then, when the conflict goes beyond compromise, revolution or reaction follows. The anarchists must recognise the usefulness and importance of the union movement; they must support its development and make it one of the levers in their action, doing all they can to ensure that, by cooperating with other forces for progress, it will open the way to a social revolution that brings to an end the class system, and to complete freedom, equality, peace and solidarity for everybody.

But it would be a great and a fatal mistake to believe, as many do, that the labour movement can and should, of its own volition, and by its very nature, lead to such a revolution. On the contrary, all movements

based on material and immediate interests (and a big labour movement can do nothing else) if they lack the stimulus, the drive, the concerted effort of people of ideas, tend inevitably to adapt to circumstances, they foster a spirit of conservatism and fear of change in those who manage to obtain better working conditions, and often end up creating new and privileged classes, and serving to uphold and consolidate the system we would seek to destroy.

Hence there is an impelling need for specifically anarchist organisations which, both from within and outside the unions, struggle for the achievement of anarchism and seek to sterilise all the germs of degeneration and reaction.

But it is obvious that in order to achieve their ends, anarchist organisations must, in their constitution and operation, remain in harmony with the principles of anarchism; that is, they must know how to blend the free action of individuals with the necessity and the joy of cooperation which serve to develop the awareness and initiative of their members and a means of education for the environment in which they operate and of a moral and material preparation for the future we desire.

Does the project under discussion satisfy these demands?

It seems to me that it does not. Instead of arousing in anarchists a greater desire for organisation, it seems deliberately designed to reinforce the prejudice of those comrades who believe that to organise means to submit to leaders and belong to an authoritarian, centralising body that suffocates any attempt at free initiative. And in fact it contains precisely those proposals that some, in the face of evident truths and despite our protests, insist on attributing to all anarchists who are described as organisers. Let us examine the Project.

First of all, it seems to me a mistake — and in any case impossible to realise — to believe that all anarchists can be grouped together in one 'General Union' — that is, in the words of the Project, In a *single*, active revolutionary body.

We anarchists can all say that we are of the same party, if by the word 'party' we mean all who are *on the same side*, that is, who share the same general aspirations and who, in one way or another, struggle for the same ends against common adversaries and enemies. But this does not mean it is possible — or even desirable — for all of us to be gathered into one specific association. There are too many differences of environment and conditions of struggle; too many possible ways of action to choose among, and also too many differences of temperament and personal incompatibilities for a *General Union*, if taken seriously, not to become, instead of a means for coordinating and reviewing the efforts of all, an

obstacle to individual activity and perhaps also a cause of more bitter internal strife.

As an example, how could one organise in the same way and with the same group a public association set up to make propaganda and agitation, publicly and a secret society restricted by the political conditions of the country in which it operates to conceal from the enemy its plans, methods and members? How could the *educationalists*, who believe that propaganda and example suffice for the gradual transformation of individuals and thus of society, adopt the same tactics as the *revolutionaries*, who are convinced of the need to destroy by violence a status quo that is maintained by violence and to create, in the face of the violence of the oppressors, the necessary conditions for the free dissemination of propaganda and the practical application of the conquered ideals? And how to keep together some people who, for particular reasons, do not get on with; and respect one another and could never be equally good and useful militants for anarchism?

Besides, even the authors of the Project (*Platforme*) declare as 'inept' any idea of creating an organisation which gathers together the representatives of the different tendencies in anarchism. Such an organisation, they say, 'incorporating heterogeneous elements, both on a theoretical and practical level, would be no more than a mechanical collection (assemblage) of individuals who conceive all questions concerning the anarchist movement from a different point of view and would inevitably break up as soon as they were put to the test of events and real life.'

That's fine. But then, if they recognise the existence of different tendencies they will surely have to leave them the right to organise in their own fashion and work for anarchy in the way that seems best to them. Or will they claim the right to expel, to *excommunicate* from anarchism all those who do not accept their programme? Certainly they say they 'want to assemble in a single organisation' all the *sound elements* of the libertarian movement; and naturally they will tend to judge as *sound* only those who think as they do. But what will they do with the elements that are *not sound*?

Of course, among those who describe themselves as anarchists there are, as in any human groupings, elements of varying worth; and what is worse, there are some who spread ideas in the name of anarchism which have very little to do with anarchism. But how to avoid the problem? *Anarchist truth* cannot and must not become the monopoly of one individual or committee; nor can it depend on the decisions of real or fictitious majorities. All that is necessary — and sufficient — is for everyone to have and to exercise the widest freedom of criticism and for each one of us to

maintain their own ideas and choose for themselves their own comrades. In the last resort the facts will decide who was right.

Let us therefore put aside the idea of bringing together *all* anarchists into a single organisation and look at this *General Union* which the Russians propose to us for what it really is — namely the Union of a particular fraction of anarchists; and let us see whether the organisational method proposed conforms with anarchist methods and principles and if it could thereby help to bring about the triumph of anarchism.

Once again, it seems to me that it cannot.

I am not doubting the sincerity of the anarchist proposals of those Russian comrades. They want to bring about anarchist communism and are seeking the means of doing so as quickly as possible. But it is not enough to want something; one also has to adopt suitable means; to get to a certain place one must take the right path or end up somewhere else. Their organisation, being typically authoritarian, far from helping to bring about the victory of anarchist communism, to which they aspire, could only falsify the anarchist spirit and lead to consequences that go against their intentions.

In fact, their *General Union* appears to consist of so many partial organisations with *secretariats* which *ideologically* direct the political and technical work; and to coordinate the activities of all the member organisations there is a *Union Executive Committee* whose task is to carry out the decisions of the Union and to oversee the 'ideological and organisational conduct of the organisations in conformity with the ideology and general strategy of the Union.'

Is this anarchist? This, in my view, is a government and a church. True, there are no police or bayonets, no faithful flock to accept the dictated *ideology*; but this only means that their government would be an impotent and impossible government and their church a nursery for heresies and schisms. The spirit, the tendency remains authoritarian and the educational effect would remain anti-anarchist.

Listen if this is not true.

> 'The executive organ of the general libertarian movement — the anarchist Union — will introduce into its ranks the principle of collective responsibility; the whole Union will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of every member; and each member will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the Union.'

And following this, which is the absolute negation of any individual independence and freedom of initiative and action, the proponents,

remembering that they are anarchists, call themselves federalists and thunder against centralisation, 'the inevitable results of which', they say, 'are the enslavement and mechanisation of the life of society and of the parties.'

But if the Union is responsible for what each member does, how can it leave to its individual members and to the various groups the freedom to apply the common programme in the way they think best? How can one be responsible for an action if it does not have the means to prevent it? Therefore, the Union and in its name the Executive Committee, would need to monitor the action of the individual members and order them what to do and what not to do; and since disapproval after the event cannot put right a previously accepted responsibility, no-one would be able to do anything at all before having obtained the go-ahead, the permission of the committee. And on the other hand, can an individual accept responsibility for the actions of a collectivity before knowing what it will do and if he cannot prevent it doing what he disapproves of?

Moreover, the authors of the Project say that it is the 'Union' which proposes and disposes. But when they refer to the wishes of the Union do they perhaps also refer to the wishes of all the members? If so, for the Union to function it would need everyone always to have the same opinion on all questions. So if it is normal that everyone should be in agreement on the general and fundamental principles, because otherwise they would not be and remain united, it cannot be assumed that thinking beings will all and always be of the same opinion on what needs to be done in the different circumstance and on the choice of persons to whom to entrust executive and directional responsibilities.

In reality — as it emerges from the text of the Project itself — the will of the Union can only mean the will of the majority, expressed through congresses which nominate and control the *Executive Committee* and decide on all the important questions. Naturally, the congresses would consist of representatives elected by the majority of member groups, and these representatives would decide on what to do, as ever by a majority of votes. So, in the best of cases, the decisions would be taken by the majority of a majority, and this could easily, especially when the opposing opinions are more than two, represent only a minority.

Furthermore it should be pointed out that, given the conditions in which anarchists live and struggle, their congresses are even less truly representative than the bourgeois parliaments. And their control over the executive bodies, if these have authoritarian powers, is rarely opportune and effective. In practice anarchist congresses are attended by whoever wishes and can, whoever has enough money and who has not been prevented by police measures. There are as many present who rep-

resent only themselves or a small number of friends as there are those truly representing the opinions and desires of a large collective. And unless precautions are taken against possible traitors and spies — indeed, because of the need for those very precautions — it is impossible to make a serious check on the representatives and the value of their mandate.

In any case this all comes down to a pure majority system, to pure parliamentarianism .

It is well known that anarchists do not accept majority government (*democracy*), any more than they accept government by the few (*aristocracy*, *oligarchy*, or dictatorship by one class or party) nor that of one individual (*autocracy*, *monarchy* or personal dictatorship).

Thousands of times anarchists have criticised so-called majority government, which anyway in practise always leads to domination by a small minority.

Do we need to repeat all this yet again for our Russian comrades?

Certainly anarchists recognise that where life is lived in common it is often necessary for the minority to come to accept the opinion of the majority. When there is an obvious need or usefulness in doing something and, to do it requires the agreement of all, the few should feel the need to adapt to the wishes of the many. And usually, in the interests of living peacefully together and under conditions of equality, it is necessary for everyone to be motivated by a spirit of concord, tolerance and compromise. But such adaptation on the one hand by one group must on the other be reciprocal, voluntary and must stem from an awareness of need and of goodwill to prevent the running of social affairs from being paralysed by obstinacy. It cannot be imposed as a principle and statutory norm. This is an ideal which, perhaps, in daily life in general, is difficult to attain in entirety, but it is a fact that in every human grouping anarchy is that much nearer where agreement between majority and minority is free and spontaneous and exempt from any imposition that does not derive from the natural order of things.

So if anarchists deny the right of the majority to govern human society in general — in which individuals are nonetheless constrained to accept certain restrictions, since they cannot isolate themselves without renouncing the conditions of human life — and if they want everything to be done by the free agreement of all, how is it possible for them to adopt the idea of government by majority in their essentially free and voluntary associations and begin to declare that anarchists should submit to the decisions of the majority before they have even heard what those might be?

It is understandable that non-anarchists would find Anarchy, defined as a free organisation without the rule of the majority over the minority, or vice versa, an unrealisable utopia, or one realisable only in a distant future; but it is inconceivable that anyone who professes to anarchist ideas and wants to make Anarchy, or at least seriously approach its realisation — today rather than tomorrow — should disown the basic principles of anarchism in the very act of proposing to fight for its victory.

In my view, an anarchist organisation must be founded on a very different basis from the one proposed by those Russian comrades.

Full autonomy, full independence and therefore full responsibility of individuals and groups; free accord between those who believe it useful to unite in cooperating for a common aim; moral duty to see through commitments undertaken and to do nothing that would contradict the accepted programme. It is on these bases that the practical structures, and the right tools to give life to the organisation should be built and designed. Then the groups, the federations of groups, the federations of federations, the meetings, the congresses, the correspondence committees and so forth. But all this must be done freely, in such a way that the thought and initiative of individuals is not obstructed, and with the sole view of giving greater effect to efforts which, in isolation, would be either impossible or ineffective. Thus congresses of an anarchist organisation, though suffering as representative bodies from all the above-mentioned imperfections, are free from any kind of authoritarianism, because they do not lay down the law; they do not impose their own resolutions on others. They serve to maintain and increase personal relationships among the most active comrades, to coordinate and encourage programmatic studies on the ways and means of taking action, to acquaint all on the situation in the various regions and the action most urgently needed in each; to formulate the various opinions current among the anarchists and draw up some kind of statistics from them — and their decisions are not obligatory rules but suggestions, recommendations, proposals to be submitted to all involved, and do not become binding and enforceable except on those who accept them, and for as long as they accept them.

The administrative bodies which they nominate — Correspondence Commission, etc. — have no executive powers, have no directive powers, unless on behalf of those who ask for and approve such initiatives, and have no authority to impose their own views — which they can certainly maintain and propagate as groups of comrades, but cannot present as the official opinion of the organisation. They publish the resolutions of the congresses and the opinions and proposals which groups and indi-

viduals communicate to them; and they serve — for those who require such a service — to facilitate relations between the groups and cooperation between those who agree on the various initiatives. Whoever wants to is free to correspond with whomsoever he wishes, or to use the services of other committees nominated by special groups.

In an anarchist organisation the individual members can express any opinion and use any tactic which is not in contradiction with accepted principles and which does not harm the activities of others. In any case a given organisation lasts for as long as the reasons for union remain greater than the reasons for dissent. When they are no longer so, then the organisation is dissolved and makes way for other, more homogeneous groups.

Clearly, the duration, the permanence of an organisation depends on how successful it has been in the long struggle we must wage, and it is natural that any institution instinctively seeks to last indefinitely. But the duration of a libertarian organisation must be the consequence of the spiritual affinity of its members and of the adaptability of its constitution to the continual changes of circumstances. When it is no longer able to accomplish a useful task it is better that it should die.

Those Russian comrades will perhaps find that an organisation like the one I propose and similar to the ones that have existed, more or less satisfactorily at various times, is not very efficient.

I understand. Those comrades are obsessed with the success of the Bolsheviks in their country and, like the Bolsheviks, would like to gather the anarchists together in a sort of disciplined army which, under the ideological and practical direction of a few leaders, would march solidly to the attack of the existing regimes, and after having won a material victory would direct the constitution of a new society. And perhaps it is true that under such a system, were it possible that anarchists would involve themselves in it, and if the leaders were men of imagination, our material effectiveness would be greater. But with what results? Would what happened to socialism and communism in Russia not happen to anarchism?

Those comrades are anxious for success as we are too. But to live and to succeed we don't have to repudiate the reasons for living and alter the character of the victory to come.

We want to fight and win, but as anarchists — for Anarchy.

Malatesta

Il Risveglio (Geneva),

October 1927

Nestor Makhno: About the ‘Platform’ (1928)

Dear Comrade Malatesta,

I have read your response to the project for an ‘Organisational Platform of a General Union of Anarchists’, a project published by the group of Russian anarchists abroad.

My impression is that either you have misunderstood the project for the ‘Platform’ or your refusal to recognise collective responsibility in revolutionary action and the directional function that the anarchist forces must take up, stems from a deep conviction about anarchism that leads you to disregard that principle of responsibility.

Yet, it is a fundamental principle, which guides each one of us in our way of understanding the anarchist idea, in our determination that it should penetrate to the masses, in its spirit of sacrifice. It is thanks to this that a man can choose the revolutionary way and ignore others. Without it no revolutionary could have the necessary strength or will or intelligence to bear the spectacle of social misery, and even less fight against it. It is through the inspiration of collective responsibility that the revolutionaries of all epochs and all schools have united their forces; it is upon this that they based their hope that their partial revolts — revolts which opened the path for the oppressed — were not in vain, that the exploited would understand their aspirations, would extract from them the applications suitable for the time and would use them to find new paths toward their emancipation.

You yourself, dear Malatesta, recognise the individual responsibility of the anarchist revolutionary. And what is more, you have lent your support to it throughout your life as a militant. At least that is how I have understood your writings on anarchism. But you deny the necessity and usefulness of collective responsibility as regards the tendencies and actions of the anarchist movement as a whole. Collective responsibility alarms you; so you reject it.

For myself, who has acquired the habit of fully facing up to the realities of our movement, your denial of collective responsibility strikes me not only as without basis but dangerous for the social revolution, in which you would do well to take account of experience when it comes to fighting a decisive battle against all our enemies at once. Now my experience of the revolutionary battles of the past leads me to believe that no matter what the order of revolutionary events may be, one needs to give out serious directives, both ideological and tactical. This means that only a collective spirit, sound and devoted to anarchism, could express the requirements of the moment, through a collectively responsible will.

None of us has the right to dodge that element of responsibility. On the contrary, if it has been until now overlooked among the ranks of the anarchists, it needs now to become, for us, communist anarchists, an article of our theoretical and practical programme.

Only the collective spirit of its militants and their collective responsibility will allow modern anarchism to eliminate from its circles the idea, historically false, that anarchism cannot be a guide — either ideologically or in practice — for the mass of workers in a revolutionary period and therefore could not have overall responsibility.

I will not, in this letter, dwell on the other parts of your article against the 'Platform' project, such as the part where you see 'a church and an authority without police'. I will express only my surprise to see you use such an argument in the course of your criticism. I have given much thought to it and cannot accept your opinion.

No, you are not right. And because I am not in agreement with your confutation, using arguments that are too facile, I believe I am entitled to ask you:

1. Should anarchism take some responsibility in the struggle of the workers against their oppressors, capitalism, and its servant the State? If not, can you say why? If yes, must the anarchists work towards allowing their movement to exert influence on the same basis as the existing social order?

2. Can anarchism, in the state of disorganisation in which it finds itself at the moment, exert any influence, ideological and practical, on social affairs and the struggle of the working class?

3. What are the means that anarchism should adopt outside the revolution and what are the means of which it can dispose to prove and affirm its constructive concepts?

4. Does anarchism need its own permanent organisations, closely tied among themselves by unity of goal and action to attain its ends?

5. What do the anarchists mean by *institutions to be established* with a view to guaranteeing the free development of society?

6. Can anarchism, in the communist society it conceives, do without social institutions? If yes, by what means? If no, which should it recognise and use and with what names bring them into being? Should the anarchists take on a leading function, therefore one of responsibility, or should they limit themselves to being irresponsible auxiliaries?

Your reply, dear Malatesta, would be of great importance to me for two reasons. It would allow me better to understand your way of seeing things as regards the questions of organising the anarchist forces and the movement in general. And — let us be frank — your opinion is immediately accepted by most anarchists and sympathisers without any discussion, as that of an experienced militant who has remained all his life firmly faithful to his libertarian ideal. It therefore depends to a certain extent on your attitude whether a full study of the urgent questions which this epoch poses to our movement will be undertaken, and therefore whether its development will be slowed down or take a new leap forward. By remaining in the stagnation of the past and present our movement will gain nothing. On the contrary, it is vital that in view of the events that loom before us it should have every chance to carry out its functions.

I set great store by your reply.

1928

with revolutionary greetings

Nestor Makhno

Errico Malatesta: In reply to *About the Platform* (1929)

Dear Comrade

I have finally seen the letter you sent me more than a year ago, about my criticism of the Project for organising a General Union of anarchists, published by a group of Russian anarchists abroad and known in our movement by the name of 'Platform'.

Knowing my situation as you do, you will certainly have understood why I did not reply.

I cannot take part as I would like in discussion of the questions which interest us most, because censorship prevents me from receiving either the publications that are considered subversive or the letters which deal with political and social topics, and only after long intervals and by fortunate chance do I hear the dying echo of what the comrades say and do. Thus, I knew that the 'Platform' and my criticism of it had been widely discussed, but I knew little or nothing about what had been said; and your letter is the first written document on the subject that I have managed to see.

If we could correspond freely, I would ask you, before entering into the discussion, to clarify your views which, perhaps owing to an imperfect translation of the Russian into French, seem to me to be in part somewhat obscure. But things being as they are, I will reply to what I have understood, and hope that I shall then be able to see your response.

You are surprised that I do not accept the principle of collective responsibility, which you believe to be a fundamental principle that guides, and must guide the revolutionaries of the past, present and future.

For my part, I wonder what that notion of collective responsibility can ever mean from the lips of an anarchist.

I know that the military are in the habit of decimating corps of rebellious soldiers or soldiers who have behaved badly in the face of the enemy by shooting at them indiscriminately. I know that the army chiefs have no scruples about destroying villages or cities and massacring an entire population, including children, because someone attempted to put up a resistance to invasion. I know that throughout the ages governments have in various ways threatened with and applied the system of collective responsibility to put a brake on the rebels, demand taxes, etc. And I understand that this could be an effective means of intimidation and oppression.

But how can people who fight for liberty and justice talk of collective responsibility when they can only be concerned with moral responsibility, whether or not material sanctions follow?!!!

If, for example, in a conflict with an armed enemy force the man beside me acts as a coward, he may do harm to me and to everyone, but the shame can only be his for lacking the courage to sustain the role he took upon himself. If in a conspiracy a co-conspirator betrays and sends his companions to prison, are the betrayed the ones responsible for the betrayal?

The 'Platform' said: 'The whole Union is responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of every member and each member will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the Union.'

Can this be reconciled with the principles of autonomy and free initiative which the anarchists profess? I answered then: 'If the Union is responsible for what each member does, how can it leave to its individual members and to the various groups the freedom to apply the common programme in the way they see fit? How can it be responsible for an action if it does not have the means to prevent it? Thus, the Union and through it the Executive Committee, would need to monitor the action of the individual members and order them what to do and what not to do; and since disapproval after the event cannot put right a previously accepted responsibility, no-one would be able to do anything before having obtained the go-ahead, permission from the committee. And then, can an individual accept responsibility for the action of a collectivity before knowing what the latter will do and if he cannot prevent it doing what he disapproves?'

Certainly I accept and support the view that anyone who associates and cooperates with others for a common purpose must feel the need to coordinate his actions with those of his fellow members and do nothing that harms the work of others and, thus, the common cause; and respect the agreements that have been made — except when wishing sincerely to leave the association when emerging differences of opinion or changed circumstances or conflict over preferred methods make cooperation impossible or inappropriate. Just as I maintain that those who do not feel and do not practice that duty should be thrown out of the association.

Perhaps, speaking of collective responsibility, you mean precisely that accord and solidarity that must exist among the members of an association. And if that is so, your expression amounts, in my view, to an incorrect use of language, but basically it would only be an unimportant question of wording and agreement would soon be reached.

The really important question that you raise in your letter concerns the function (*le role*) of the anarchists in the social movement and the way they mean to carry it out. This is a matter of basics, of the rai-

son d'etre of anarchism and one needs to be quite clear as to what one means.

You ask if the anarchists should (in the revolutionary movement and communistic organisation of society) assume a directional and therefore responsible role, or limit themselves to being irresponsible auxiliaries.

Your question leaves me perplexed, because it lacks precision. It is possible to direct through advice and example, leaving the people — provided with the opportunities and means of supplying their own needs themselves — to adopt our methods and solutions if these are, or seem to be, better than those suggested and carried out by others. But it is also possible to direct by taking over command, that is by becoming a government and imposing one's own ideas and interests through police methods.

In which way would you want to direct?

We are anarchists because we believe that government (any government) is an evil, and that it is not possible to gain liberty, solidarity and justice without liberty. We cannot therefore aspire to government and we must do everything possible to prevent others — classes, parties or individuals — from taking power and becoming governments.

The responsibility of the leaders, a notion by which it seems to me that you want to guarantee that the public are protected from their abuses and errors, means nothing to me. Those in power are not truly responsible except when faced with a revolution, and we cannot make the revolution every day, and generally it is only made after the government has already done all the evil it can.

You will understand that I am far from thinking that the anarchists should be satisfied with being the simple auxiliaries of other revolutionaries who, not being anarchists, naturally aspire to become the government.

On the contrary, I believe that we, anarchists, convinced of the validity of our programme, must strive to acquire overwhelming influence in order to draw the movement towards the realisation of our ideals. But such influence must be won by doing more and better than others, and will only be useful if won in that way.

Today we must deepen, develop and propagate our ideas and coordinate our forces in a common action. We must act within the labour movement to prevent it being limited to and corrupted by the exclusive pursuit of small improvements compatible with the capitalist system; and we must act in such a way that it contributes to preparing for a complete social transformation. We must work with the unorganised, and perhaps unorganisable, masses to awaken the spirit of revolt and the desire and hope for a free and happy life. We must initiate and sup-

port all movements that tend to weaken the forces of the State and of capitalism and to raise the mental level and material conditions of the workers. We must, in short, prepare, and prepare ourselves, morally and materially, for the revolutionary act which will open the way to the future.

And then, in the revolution, we must take an energetic part (if possible before and more effectively than the others) in the essential material struggle and drive it to the utmost limit in destroying all the repressive forces of the State. We must encourage the workers to take possession of the means of production (land, mines, factories and workshops, means of transport, etc.) and of stocks of manufactured goods; to organise immediately, on their own, an equitable distribution of consumer goods, and at the same time supply products for trade between communes and regions and for the continuation and intensification of production and all services useful to the public. We must, in all ways possible and according to local circumstances and opportunities, promote action by the workers' associations, the cooperatives, the voluntary groups — to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian powers, new governments, opposing them with violence if necessary, but above all rendering them useless. And where we do not find sufficient consensus among the people and cannot prevent the re-establishment of the State with its authoritarian institutions and its coercive bodies, we must refuse to take part or to recognise it, rebelling against its impositions and demanding full autonomy for ourselves and for all the dissident minorities. In other words, we must remain in an actual or potential state of rebellion and, unable to win in the present, must at least prepare for the future.

Is this what you too mean by the part the anarchists should take in the preparation and carrying out of the revolution?

From what I know of you and your work I am inclined to believe that you do.

But, when I see that in the Union that you support there is an Executive Committee to give ideological and organisational direction to the association I am assailed by the doubt that you would also like to see, within the general movement, a central body that would, in an authoritarian manner, dictate the theoretical and practical programme of the revolution.

If this is so we are poles apart.

Your organisation, or your managerial organs, may be composed of anarchists but they would only become nothing other than a government. Believing, in completely good faith, that they are necessary to the triumph of the revolution, they would, as a priority, make sure that they were well placed enough and strong enough to impose their will. They

would therefore create armed corps for material defence and a bureaucracy for carrying out their commands and in the process they would paralyse the popular movement and kill the revolution.

That is what, I believe, has happened to the Bolsheviks.

There it is. I believe that the important thing is not the victory of our plans, our projects, our utopias, which in any case need the confirmation of experience and can be modified by experience, developed and adapted to the real moral and material conditions of the age and place. What matters most is that the people. men and women lose the sheeplike instincts and habits which thousands of years of slavery have instilled in them, and learn to think and act freely. And it is to this great work of moral liberation that the anarchists must specially dedicate themselves.

I thank you for the attention you have given to my letter and, in the hope of hearing from you further, send you my cordial greetings.

Risveglio (Geneva), December 1929

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The Anarchists in the Present Time

Errico Malatesta

June 1930

A section of our movement is eagerly discussing about the practical problems that the revolution will have to solve.

This is good news and a good omen, even if the solutions proposed so far are neither abundant nor satisfactory.

The days are gone when people used to believe that an insurrection would suffice for everything, that defeating the army and the police and knocking down the powers that be would be enough to bring about all the rest, i.e. the most essential part.

It used to be claimed that providing sufficient food, adequate accommodations and good clothes to everyone immediately after the victorious uprising would be enough for the revolution to be founded on unshakable ground and be able to readily proceed towards higher and higher ideals. Nobody took the trouble to check whether there would be actually enough goods for everyone and whether the existing goods were or not in the places where they were most needed. The display of stores overflowing with goods deceptively influenced the hungry and ragged crowds. The agitators, whether conscious or not of the error, found that illusion an effective means of propaganda. However, if on the one hand it is well known today that the production done by everyone for the benefit of everyone else with the aid of mechanics and chemistry can indefinitely grow, on the other hand it is also true that the current system's rule is that capitalists get the workers to produce only as much as they can profitably sell, stopping the production at the point where their profit stops growing. If by mistake or by competition among capitalists an overproduction occurs, a crisis comes and drives the marketplace back to that condition of relative scarcity which is most advantageous for manufacturers and dealers. Hence it is clear how dan-

gerous it is to spread the belief that goods abound and that there is no urge to set to work.

Gone are also the days when we could say that demolishing is our task, and that our descendants will see to reconstructing. That was a cheap statement that could only be accepted back when an imminent revolution was unlikely. It only aimed at arousing aversion and hate against the present situation, to sharpen the desire of change. However, the European situation is now full of revolutionary potential; at any time we might have to pass from theory to practice, from propaganda to action. Now it is time to remember that the social and individual lives allow no interruption: both we and our children have to eat and live every day, before our children can start seeing to it.

So, we are agreed in thinking that apart from the problem of assuring victory against the material forces of the adversary there is also the problem of giving life to the revolution after victory. We are in agreement that a revolution which were to result in chaos would not be a vital revolution.

But one must not exaggerate; it should not be thought that we must, and can, find, here and now, a perfect solution for every possible problem. One should not want to foresee and determine too much, because instead of preparing for anarchy we might find ourselves indulging in unattainable dreams or even becoming authoritarians, and consciously or otherwise, proposing to act like a government which in the name of freedom and the popular will subject people to its domination.

I happen to read the strangest things: strange if one considers that they were written by anarchists.

For instance, a comrade says that "the crowd would rightly rail against us if we had first urged them to the painful sacrifices of a revolution and then we told them: do what your will suggests you, get together, produce and live together as it best suits you".

What! Did not we always tell the crowd that they can expect their good neither from us nor from others? That they have to win their good for themselves? That they will get only what they can take and they will keep only what they can defend? It is just and natural for us, initiators, animators and part ourselves of the mass, to try and push the movement in the direction that seems us best, and be as ready as possible for anything that needs to be done. However, the fundamental principle is still that making decisions is up to the free will of those concerned.

I also read: "We will create a regime that, though not fully libertarian, will have our mark and above all will pave the way to the progressive realization of our principles."

What is this? A little tiny government, a model of goodness, which will kill itself as soon as possible to give way to anarchy!!!

Were not we already in agreement that governments do not tend to kill themselves, but rather to perpetuate themselves and become more and more despotic? Were not we agreed that the mission of the anarchists is to fight, while enduring it, any regime not based on a complete freedom? Did not we also use to claim that anarchists in power would not fare better than the others?

Another comrade, who is among those who most care about the necessity of having a "plan", and basically puts all his hope in the workers' unions, says:

"After the triumph of the revolution, let the management of all the means of production, transportation, exchange, etc. be given to the working class, previously educated by us to this great social function."

Previously educated by us to this great social function! How many centuries should go by before the revolution wished by that comrade? If only centuries were sufficient! The fact is that one cannot educate the masses if they are not in a position, or obliged by necessity, to act for themselves; the revolutionary organization of the workers, useful and necessary as it is, cannot be stretched indefinitely: at a certain point if it does not erupt in revolutionary action, either the government strangles it or the organization itself degenerates and breaks up — and one has to start all over again from the beginning.

How true that the most 'practical' people are often the most naive utopians!

Would not all this discussion sound quite academic if in the concrete it was about a country where the free workers' organization is destroyed and prohibited, the freedoms of press, assembly and association are abolished, and the agitators, be they anarchist, socialist, communist or republican are either abroad as refugees, or on forced residence on an island, or locked in prison, or put in the condition of being unable to speak, to move about and almost even to breath?

Can one reasonably hope that the next upheaval, in a country in such conditions, will be a social revolution, in the broad and utter sense that we attribute to this word? Does not it look like winning back the necessary conditions for propaganda and organization is rather the one possible and urgent task nowadays?

It seems to me that all these difficulties, uncertainties and contradictions crop up when one wants to make anarchy without anarchists, or believes that propaganda is enough to convert the whole of the population, or its vast majority, before the surrounding conditions have radically changed.

Some people claim that "the revolution will be anarchist or will not be at all". This is yet another of those pretentious phrases that a thorough analysis proves to be either meaningless or greatly mistaken. In fact, if one means that the revolution, as we intend it, must be anarchist, such claim is just a tautology, i.e. a roundabout that explains nothing, as if one claimed, for instance, that white paper must be white. If it is meant, instead, that there cannot be any other revolution but an anarchist one, then the claim is a great mistake, as the life of human societies has already seen and will certainly see again movements that radically change the existing conditions and give a new direction to the history to come, thus deserving the name of revolutions. I would be unable to accept the view that all past revolutions though they were not anarchist revolutions were useless, nor that future ones which will still not be anarchist will be useless. Indeed, I incline to the view that the complete triumph of anarchy will come by evolution, gradually, rather than by violent revolution: when an earlier or several earlier revolutions will have destroyed the major military and economic obstacles which are opposed to the spiritual development of the people, to increasing production to the level of needs and desires and to the harmonizing of contrasting interests.

In any case, if we take into account our sparse numbers and the prevalent attitudes among the masses, and if we do not wish to confuse our wishes with the reality, we must expect that the next revolution will not be an anarchist one, and therefore what is more pressing, is to think of what we can and must do in a revolution in which we will be a relatively small and badly armed minority.

* * *

Some comrades, perhaps still under the spell of the socialist brags and illusions born by the Russian revolution, believe that the authoritarians have an easier task than ourselves, because they have a 'plan': get hold of the power and forcibly impose their system.

Such belief is wrong. Communists and socialists certainly wish to grab the power, and in certain circumstances they may succeed. However, the most intelligent among them know too well that, once in power, they could well tyrannize the people and submit it to whimsical and dangerous experiments, they could well replace the bourgeoisie with a new privileged class, but they could not realize socialism, they could not apply their 'plan'. How can a millenary society be destroyed and a new and better society be established by the decrees made by few people and imposed by bayonets! This is the one honest reason (I do not want to

deal with others that can be less easily confessed) why in Italy socialists and communists withheld their co-operation and blocked the revolution when it was possible to make one. They felt they would not be able to keep control of the situation and would have to either give way to the anarchists or become an instrument of reaction. As for the countries where they actually got the power... what they did is well-known.

If only we had the material force to get rid of the material force that oppresses us, our task would be much easier, because we require nothing of the masses but what the masses can and want to do; we only do all that we can to develop their capability and will.

But we must, however, beware of ourselves becoming less anarchist because the masses are not ready for anarchy. If they want a government, it is unlikely that we will be able to prevent a new government being formed, but this is no reason for our not trying to persuade the people that government is useless and harmful or of preventing the government from also imposing on us and other like us who do not want it. We will have to exert ourselves to ensure that social life and especially economic standards improve without the intervention of government, and thus we must be as ready as possible to deal with the practical problems of production and distribution, remembering, incidentally, that those most suited to organize work are those who now do it, each in his own trade.

* * *

We must seek to play an active, and if possible a preponderant role in the insurrectionary act. But with the defeat of the forces of repression which serve to keep the people in slavery; with the demobilization of the army, the dissolution of the police and the magistrature, etc.; having armed the people so that it can resist any armed attempt by reaction to reestablish itself; having called on willing hands to undertake the organization of public services and to provide, with concepts of just distribution, for the most urgent needs, using with care the existing stocks in the various localities — having done all this, we shall have to see to it that there must be no wasted effort and that those institutions, those traditions and habits, those methods of production, exchange and aid should be respected and utilized, if they perform, even insufficiently or badly, necessary services, seeking by all means to destroy every trace of privilege, but being chary of destroying anything that cannot be replaced by something which serves the general good more effectively. We must push the workers to take possession of the factories, to federate among themselves and work for the community, and similarly the peasants should take over the land and the produce usurped by the landlords,

and come to an agreement with the industrial workers on the necessary exchange of goods.

If we are unable to prevent the constitution of a new government, if we are unable to destroy it immediately, we should in either case refuse to support it in any shape or form. We should reject military conscription, and refuse to pay taxes. Disobedience on principle, resistance to the bitter end against every imposition by the authorities, and an absolute refusal to accept any position of command.

If we are unable to overthrow capitalism, we shall have to demand for ourselves and for all who want it, the right of free access to the necessary means of production to maintain an independent existence.

Advise when we have suggestions to offer; teach if we know more than others; set the example for a life based on free agreement between individuals; defend even with force if necessary and possible, our autonomy against any government provocation... but command — never.

In this way we shall not achieve anarchy, which cannot be imposed against the wishes of the people, but at least we shall be preparing the way for it.

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From Vogliamo!, June, 1930

Against the Constituent Assembly as Against the Dictatorship

Errico Malatesta

1930

Everyone has the right to state and defend their ideas, but nobody has the right to misrepresent someone else's ideas to strengthen their own.

After years without seeing the *Martello*, the issue of June 21 fell into my hands. I found in it an article signed *X.*, which talks, in a more or less imaginary way, about an insurrectionary project, which was allegedly promoted by myself, Giulietti and... D'Annunzio. From the article it appears that someone else who writes under the name of *Ursus* had previously written about such events, but I could not manage to find his article.

Never mind. I cannot tell now how the events referred to by *X.* and *Ursus* actually happened, because this is not the right time to let the public, and thus the police, know what one may have done or attempted to do. Also, I could not betray the trust that may have been put in me by persons, who would not like to be named now. I can be surprised, though, that these *X.* and *Ursus*, moved by the desire to find support to their tactical thesis, have not realized how tactless it is to involve someone who usually does not receive newspapers, and thus does not know what is said about him and cannot reply — in addition to their feeling no duty, in a personal matter, to take at least responsibility for what they say and sign with their real names.

What I care about — and what makes me take the trouble of pointing out said articles — is protesting the completely false statement that, at any moment whatsoever of my political activity, I may have been a supporter of the Constituent Assembly. The issue bears such a theoretical and practical relevance, that it could become topical any moment, and

it cannot leave cold anyone who calls himself anarchist and wants to act like an anarchist in any given situation.

To be precise, at the time when the events badly recollected by *X.* and *Ursus* occurred, I was striving, with my words and writings, to fight the faith and hope put by many subversives (obviously non-anarchist) in the possibility of a Constituent Assembly.

At that time I claimed, as I have always done before and after, that a Constituent Assembly is the means used by the privileged classes, when a dictatorship is not possible, either to prevent a revolution, or, when a revolution has already broken out, to stop its progress with the excuse of legalizing it, and to take back as much as possible of the gains that the people had made during the insurrectional period.

The Constituent Assembly, with its making asleep and smothering, and the dictatorship, with its crushing and killing, are the two dangers that threaten any revolution. Anarchists must aim their efforts against them.

Of course, since we are a relatively small minority, it is quite possible, and even likely, that the next upheaval will end up in the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. However, this would not happen with our participation and co-operation. It would happen against our will, despite our efforts, simply because we will not have been strong enough to prevent it. In this case, we will have to be as distrustful and inflexibly opposed to a Constituent Assembly as we have always been to ordinary parliaments and any other legislative body.

* * *

Let this be quite clear. I am not an advocate of the 'all or nothing' theory. I believe that nobody actually behaves in such a way as implied by that theory: it would be impossible.

This is just a slogan used by many to warn about the illusion of petty reforms and alleged concessions from government and masters, and to always remind of the necessity and urgency of the revolutionary act: it is a phrase that can serve, if loosely interpreted, as an incentive to a fight without quarter against every kind of oppressors and exploiters. However, if taken literally, it is plain nonsense.

The 'all' is the ideal that gets farther and wider as progresses are made, and therefore it can never be reached. The 'nothing' would be some abysmally uncivilized state, or at least a supine submission to the present oppression.

I believe that one must take all that can be taken, whether much or little: do whatever is possible today, while always fighting to make possible what today seems impossible.

For instance, if today we cannot get rid of every kind of government, this is not a good reason for taking no interest in defending the few acquired liberties and fighting to gain more of those. If now we cannot completely abolish the capitalist system and the resulting exploitation of the workers, this is no good reason to quit fighting to obtain higher salaries and better working conditions. If we cannot abolish commerce and replace it with the direct exchange among producers, this is no good reason for not seeking the means to escape the exploitation of traders and profiteers as much as possible. If the oppressors' power and the state of the public opinion prevent now from abolishing the prisons and providing to any defence against wrongdoers with more humane means, not for this we would lose interest in an action for abolishing death penalty, life imprisonment, close confinement and, in general, the most ferocious means of repression by which what is called social justice, but actually amounts to a barbarian revenge, is exercised. If we cannot abolish the police, not for this we would allow, without protesting and resisting, that the policemen beat the prisoners and allow themselves all sorts of excesses, overstepping the limit prescribed to them by the laws in force themselves...

I am breaking off here, as there are thousands and thousands of cases, both in individual and social life, in which, being unable to obtain 'all', one has to try and get as much as possible.

At this point, the question of fundamental importance arises about the best way of defending what one has got and fighting to obtain more; for there is one way that weakens and kills the spirit of independence and the consciousness of one's own right, thus compromising the future and the present itself, while there is another way that uses every tiny victory to make greater demands, thus preparing the minds and the environment to the longed complete emancipation.

What constitutes the characteristic, the raison d'etre of anarchism is the conviction that the governments — dictatorships, parliaments, etc. — are always instruments of conservation, reaction, oppression; and freedom, justice, well-being for everyone must come from the fight against authority, from free enterprise and free agreement among individuals and groups.

* * *

One problem worries many anarchists nowadays, and rightly so.

As they find it insufficient to work on abstract propaganda and revolutionary technical preparation, which is not always possible and is done without knowing when it will be fruitful, they look for something practical to do here and now, in order to accomplish as much as possible of

our ideas, despite the adverse conditions; something that morally and materially helps the anarchists themselves and at the same time serves as an example, a school, an experimental field.

Practical proposals are coming from various sides. They are all good to me, if they appeal to free initiative and to a spirit of solidarity and justice, and tend to take individuals away from the domination of the government and the master. And to avoid wasting time in continuously recurring discussions that never bring new facts or arguments, I would encourage those who have a project to try to immediately accomplish it, as soon as they find support from the minimal necessary number of participants, without waiting, usually in vain, for the support of all or many — experience will show whether those projects were workable, and it will let the vital ones survive and thrive.

Let everyone try the paths they deem best and fittest to their temperament, both today with respect to the little things that can be done in the present environment, and tomorrow in the vast ground that the revolution will offer to our activity. In any case, what is logically mandatory for us all, if we do not want to stop being truly anarchist, is to never surrender our freedom in the hands of an individual or class dictatorship, a despot or a Constituent Assembly; for what depends on us, our freedom must find its foundation in the equal freedom of all.

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From Adunata, October 4, 1930

Peter Kropotkin

Recollections and Criticisms of an Old Friend

Errico Malatesta

15 April 1931

Peter Kropotkin is without doubt one of those who have contributed perhaps more—perhaps more even than Bakunin and Elisee Reclus—to the elaboration and propagandation of anarchist ideas. And he has therefore well deserved the recognition and the admiration that all anarchists feel for him.

But in homage to the truth and in the greater interest of the cause, one must recognize that his activity has not all been wholly beneficial. It was not his fault; on the contrary, it was the very eminence of his qualities which gave rise to the ills I am proposing to discuss.

Naturally, Kropotkin being a mortal among mortals could not always avoid error and embrace the whole truth. One should have therefore profited by his invaluable contribution and continued the search which would lead to further advances. But his literary talents, the importance and volume of his output, his indefatigable activity, the prestige that came to him from his reputation as a great scientist, the fact that he had given up a highly privileged position to defend, at the cost of suffering and danger, the popular cause, and furthermore the fascination of his personality which held the attention of those who had the good fortune to meet him, all made him acquire a notoriety and an influence such that he appeared, and to a great extent he really was, the recognized master for most anarchists.

As a result of which, criticism was discouraged and the development of the anarchist idea was arrested. For many years, in spite of the incoloastic and progressive spirit of anarchists, most of them so far as theory and propaganda were concerned, did no more than study and quote

Kropotkin. To express oneself other than the way he did was considered by many comrades almost as heresy.

It would therefore be opportune to subject Kropotkin's teaching to close and critical analysis in order to separate that which is ever real and alive from that which was more recent thought and experience will have shown to be mistaken. A matter which would concern not only Kropotkin, for the errors that one can blame him for having committed were already being professed by anarchists before Kropotkin acquired his eminent place in the movement: he confirmed them and made them last by adding the weight of his talent and his prestige; but all us old militants, or almost all of us, have our share of responsibility.

In writing now about Kropotkin I do not intend to examine his teachings. I only wish to record a few impressions and recollections, which may I believe, serve to make better known his moral and intellectual stature as well as understanding more clearly his qualities and his faults.

But first of all I will say a few words which come from the heart because I cannot think of Kropotkin without being moved by the recollection of his immense goodness. I remember what he did in Geneva in the winter of 1879 to help a group of Italian refugees in dire straits, among them myself; I remember the small attentions, I would call maternal, which he bestowed on me when one night in London having been the victim of an accident I went and knocked on his door; I recall the innumerable kind actions towards all sorts of people; I remember the cordial atmosphere with which he was surrounded. Because he was a really good person, of that goodness which is almost unconscious and needs to relive all suffering and be surrounded by smiles and happiness. One would have in fact said that he was good without knowing it; in any case he didn't like one saying so, and he was offended when I wrote in an article on the occasion of his 70th birthday that his goodness was the first of his qualities. He would rather boast of his energy and courage—perhaps because these latter qualities had been developed in, and for, the struggle, whereas goodness was the spontaneous expression of his intimate nature.

I had the honour and good fortune of being for many years linked to Kropotkin by the warmest friendship.

We loved each other because we were inspired by the same passion, by the same hopes…and also by the same illusions.

Both of us were optimistic by temperament (I believe nevertheless that Kropotkin's optimism surpassed mine by a long chalk and possibly sprung from a different source) and we saw things with rose tinted

spectacles—alas! Everything was too rosy—we then hoped, and it is more than fifty years ago, in a revolution to be made in the immediate future which was to have ushered in our ideal society. During these long years there were certainly periods of doubt and discouragement. I remember Kropotkin once telling me: My dear Errico, I fear we are alone, you and I, in believing a revolution to be near at hand". But they were passing moods; very soon confidence returned; we explained away the existing difficulties and the skepticism of the comrades and went on working and hoping.

Nevertheless it must not be imagined that on all questions we shared the same views. On the contrary, on many fundamentals we were far from being in agreement, and almost every time we met we would have noisy and heated discussions; but as Kropotkin always felt sure that right was on his side, and could not calmly suffer to be contradicted, and I, on the other hand, had great respect for his erudition and deep concern for his uncertain health, these discussions always ended by changing the subject to avoid undue excitement.

But this did not in any way harm the intimacy of our relationship, because we loved each other and because we collaborated for sentimental rather than intellectual reasons. Whatever may have been our differences of interpretation of the facts, of the arguments by which we justified out actions, in practice we wanted the same things and were motivated by the same intense feeling for freedom, justice and the being of all mankind. We could therefore get on together.

And in fact there was never serious disagreement between us until that day in 1914 when we were faced with a question of practical conduct of capital importance to both of us: that of the attitude to be adopted by anarchists to the War. On that occasion Kropotkin's old preferences for all that which is Russian and French were reawakened and exacerbated in him, and he declared himself an enthusiastic supporter of the *Entente*. He seemed to forget that he was an Internationalist, a socialist and an anarchist; he forgot what he himself had written only a short time before about the war that the Capitalists were preparing, and began expressing admiration for the worst Allied statesmen and Generals, and at the same time treated as cowards the anarchists who refused to join the *Union Sacre*, regretting that his age and his poor health prevented him from taking up rifle and marching against the Germans. It was impossible therefore to see eye to eye: for me he was a truly pathological case. All the same it was one of the saddest, most painful moments of my life (and, I dare to suggest, for him too) when, after a more than acrimonious discussion, we parted like adversaries, almost as enemies.

Great was my sorrow at the loss of the friend and for the harm done to the cause as a result the confusion that would be created among the comrades by his defection. But in spite of everything the love and esteem which I felt for the man were unimpaired, just as the hope that once the moment of euphoria had passed and their proper perspective, he would admit his mistake and return to the movement, the Kropotkin of old.

Kropotkin was at the same time a scientist and a social reformer. He was inspired by two passions: the desire for knowledge and the desire to act for the good of humanity, two noble passions which can be mutually useful and which one would like to see in all men, without being, for all this, one and the same thing. But Kropotkin was an eminently systematic personality and he wanted to explain everything with one principle, and reduce everything to unity and often, did so, in my opinion, at the expense of logic.

Thus he used science to support his social aspirations, because in his opinion, they were simply rigorous scientific deductions.

I have no special competence to judge Kropotkin as a scientist. I know that he had in his early youth rendered notable service to geography and geology, and I appreciate the great importance of his book on Mutual Aid, and I am convinced that with his vast culture and noble intelligence, could have made a greater contribution to the advancement of the sciences had his thoughts and activity not been absorbed in the social struggle. Nevertheless it seems to me that he lacked that something which goes to make a true man of science; the capacity to forget one's aspirations and preconceptions and observe facts with cold objectivity. He seemed to be to be what I would gladly call, a poet of science. By an original intuition, he might have succeeded in foreseeing new truths, but these truths would have needed to be verified by others with less, or no imagination, but who were better equipped with what is called the scientific spirit. Kropotkin was too passionate to be an accurate observer.

His normal procedure was to start with a hypothesis and then look for the facts that would confirm it—which may be a good method for discovering new things; but what happened, and quite unintentionally, was that he did not see the ones which invalidated his hypothesis.

He could not bring himself to admit a fact, and often not even consider it, if he had not first managed to explain it, that is to fit it into his system.

As an example I will recount an episode in which I played a part.

When I was in the Argentinean Pampas (in the years 1885 to 1889), I happened to read something about the experiments in hypnosis by the School of Nancy, which was new to me. I was very interested in the

subject but had no opportunity at the time to find out more. When I was back again in Europe I saw Kropotkin in London, and asked him if he could give me some information on hypnosis. Kropotkin flatly denied that there was any truth in it; that it was either all a fake or a question of hallucinations. Some time later I saw him again, and the conversation turned once more onto the subject. To my great surprise I found that his opinion had completely changed; hypnotic phenomena had become a subject of interest deserving to be studied. What had happened then? Had he learned new facts or had he had convincing proofs of those he had previously denied? Not at all. He had, quite simply, read in a book, by I don't know which German physiologist, a theory in the relationship between the two hemispheres of the brain which could serve to explain, well or badly, the phenomena of hypnosis.

In view of this mental predisposition which allowed him to accommodate things to suit himself in questions of pure science, in which there are no reasons why passion should obfuscate the intellect, one could foresee what would happen over those questions which intimately concerned his deepest wishes and his most cherished hopes.

Kropotkin adhered to the materialist philosophy that prevailed among scientists in the second half of the 19th century, the philosophy of Moleschott, Buchner, Vogt and others; and consequently his concept of the Universe was rigorously mechanistic.

According to his system, Will (a creative power whose source and nature we cannot comprehend, just as, likewise, we do not understand the nature and source of "matter" or of any of the other "first principles")—I was saying, Will which contributed much or little in determining the conduct of individuals—and of society, does not exist and is a mere illusion. All that has been, that is and will be, from the path of the stars to the birth and decline of a civilization, from the perfume of a rose to the smile on a mother's lips, from an earthquake to the thoughts of a Newton, from a tyrant's cruelty to a saint's goodness, everything had to, must, and will occur as a result of an inevitable sequence of causes and effects of mechanical origin, which leaves no possibility of variety. The illusion of Will is itself a mechanical fact.

Naturally if Will has no power, if everything is necessary and cannot be otherwise, then ideas of freedom, justice and responsibility have no meaning, and have no bearing on reality.

Thus logically all we can do is to contemplate what is happening in the world, with indifference, pleasure or pain, depending on one's personal feelings, without hope and without the possibility of changing anything.

So Kropotkin, who was very critical of the fatalism of the Marxists, was, himself the victim of mechanistic fatalism which is far more inhibiting.

But philosophy could not kill the powerful Will that was in Kropotkin. He was too strongly convinced of the truth of his system to abandon it or stand by passively while others cast doubt on it; he was too passionate, and too desirous of liberty and justice to be halted by the difficulty of a logical contradiction, and give up the struggle. He got round the dilemma by introducing anarchism into his system and making it into a scientific truth.

He would seek confirmation for his view by maintaining that all recent discoveries in all the sciences, from astronomy right through to biology and sociology coincided in demonstrating always more clearly that anarchy is the form of social organization which is imposed by natural laws.

One could have pointed out that whatever are the conclusions that can be drawn from contemporary science, it was a fact that if new discoveries were to destroy present scientific beliefs, he would have remained an anarchist in spite of science, just as he was an anarchist in spite of logic. But Kropotkin would not have been able to admit the possibility of a conflict between science and his social aspirations and would have always thought up a means, no matter whether it was logical or not, to reconcile his mechanistic philosophy with his anarchism.

Thus, after having said that "anarchy is a concept of the Universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena which embrace the whole of nature including the life of societies" (*I confess I have never succeeded in understanding what this might mean*) Kropotkin would forget his mechanistic concept as a matter of no importance, and throw himself into the struggle with the fire, enthusiasm and confidence of one who believes in the efficacy of his Will and who hopes by his activity to obtain or contribute to the achievement of the things he wants.

In point of fact Kropotkin's anarchism and communism were much more the consequence of his sensibility than of reason. In him the heart spoke first and then reason followed to justify and reinforce the impulses of the heart.

What constituted the true essence of his character was his love of mankind, the sympathy he had for the poor and the oppressed. He truly suffered for others, and found injustice intolerable even if it operated in his favour.

At the time when I frequented him in London, he earned his living by collaborating to scientific magazines and other publications, and lived

in relatively comfortable circumstances; but he felt a kind of remorse at being better off than most manual workers and always seemed to want to excuse himself for the small comforts he could afford. He often said, when speaking of himself and of those in similar circumstances: "If we have been able to educate ourselves and develop our faculties; if we have access to intellectual satisfactions and live in not too bad material circumstances, it is because we have benefited, through and accident of rebirth, by the exploitation to which the workers are subjected; and therefore the struggle for the emancipation of the workers is a duty, a debt which we must repay."

It was for his love of justice, and as if by way of expiating the privileges that he had enjoyed, that he had given up his position, neglected his studies he so enjoyed, to devote himself to the education of the workers of St. Petersburg and the struggle against the despotism of the Tsars. Urged on by these same feelings he had subsequently joined the International and accepted anarchist ideas. Finally, among the different interpretations of anarchism he chose and made his own the communist-anarchist program which, being based on solidarity and on love, goes beyond justice itself.

But as was obviously foreseeable, his philosophy was not without influence on the way he conceived the future and on the form the struggle for its achievement should take.

Since, according to his philosophy that which occurs must necessarily occur, so also the communist-anarchism he desired, must inevitably triumph as if by a law of Nature.

And this freed him from any doubt and removed all difficulties from his path. The bourgeois world was destined to crumble; it was already breaking up and revolutionary action only served to hasten the process.

His immense influence as a propagandist as well as stemming from his great talents, rested on the fact that he showed things to be so simple, so easy, so inevitable, that those who heard him speak or read his articles were immediately fired with enthusiasm.

Moral problems vanished because he attributed to the "people", the working masses, great abilities and all the virtues. With reason he praised the moral influence of work, but did not sufficiently clearly see the depressing and corrupting effects of misery and subjection. And he thought that it would be sufficient to abolish the capitalists' privileges and the rulers' power for all men immediately to start loving each other as brothers and to care for the interests of others as they would for their own.

In the same way he did not see the material difficulties, or he easily dismissed them. He had accepted the idea, widely held among the an-

archists at the time, that the accumulated stocks of food and manufactured goods, were so abundant that for a long time to come it would not be necessary to worry about production; and he always declared that the immediate problem was one of consumption, that for the triumph of the revolution it was necessary to satisfy the needs of everyone immediately as well as abundantly, and that production would follow the rhythm of consumption. From this idea came that of "taking from the storehouses" ("presanel mucchio"), which he polularised and which is certainly the simplest way of conceiving communism and the most likely to please the masses, but which is also the most primitive, as well as truly utopian, way. And when he was made to observe that this accumulation of products could not possibly exist, because the bosses normally allow for the production of what they can sell at a profit, and that possibly at the beginning of a revolution it would be necessary to organize a system of rationing, and press for an intensification of production rather than call upon to help themselves from a storehouse which in the event would be nonexistent, Kropotkin set about studying the problem at first hand and arrived at the conclusion that in fact such abundance did not exist and that some countries were continually threatened by shortages. But he recovered by thinking of the great potentialities of agriculture aided by science. He took as examples the results obtained by a few cultivators and gifted agronomists over limited areas and drew the most encouraging conclusions, without thinking of the difficulties that would be put in the way by the ignorance and aversion of peasants to what is change, and in any case to the time that would be needed to achieve general acceptance of the new forms of cultivation and of distribution.

As always, Kropotkin saw things as he would have wished them to be and as we all hope they will be one day; he considered as existing or immediately realizable that which must be won through long and bitter struggle.

At bottom Kropotkin conceived nature as a kind of Providence, thanks to which there had to be harmony in all things, including human societies.

And this has led many anarchists to repeat that *"Anarchy is Natural Order"*, a phrase with an exquisite kropotkinian flavour.

If it is true that the law of Nature is Harmony, I suggest one would be entitled to ask why Nature has waited for anarchists to be born, and goes on waiting for them to triumph, in order to destroy the terrible and destructive conflicts from which mankind has already suffered.

Would one not be closer to the truth in saying that anarchy is the struggle, in human society, against the disharmonies of Nature?

I have stressed the two errors which, in my opinion, Kropotkin committed—his theory of fatalism and his excessive optimism, because I believe I have observed the harmful results they have produced on our movement.

There were comrades who took the fatalist theory—which they euphemistically referred to as determinism—seriously and as a result lost all revolutionary spirit. The revolution, they said, is not made; it will come when the time is ripe for it, and it is useless, unscientific and even ridiculous to try to provoke it. And armed with such sound reasons, they withdrew from the movement and went about their own business. But it would be wrong to believe that this was a convenient excuse to withdraw from the struggle. I have known many comrades of great courage and worth, who have exposed themselves to great dangers and who have sacrificed their freedom and even their lives in the name of anarchy while being convinced of the uselessness of their actions. They have acted out of disgust for present society, in a spirit of revenge, out of desperation, or the love of the grand gesture, but without thinking thereby of serving the cause of revolution, and consequently without selecting the target and the opportune moment, or without bothering to coordinate their action with that of others.

On the other hand, those who without troubling themselves with philosophy have wanted to work towards, and for, the revolution, have imagined the problems as much simpler than they are in reality, did not foresee the difficulties, and prepare for them...and because of this we have found ourselves impotent even when there was perhaps a chance of effective action.

May the errors of the past serve to teach us to do better in the future.

I have said what I had to say.

I do not think my strictures on him can diminish Kropotkin, the person, who remains, in spite of everything one of the shining lights of our movement.

If they are just, they will serve to show that no man is free from error, not even when he is gifted with the great intelligence and the generous heart of a Kropotkin.

In any case anarchists will always find in his writings a treasury of fertile ideas and in his life an example and an incentive in the struggle for all that is good.

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The Anarchist Revolution

Errico Malatesta

The revolution is the creation of new living institutions, new groupings, new social relationships; it is the destruction of privileges and monopolies; it is the new spirit of justice, of brotherhood, of freedom which must renew the whole of social life, raise the moral level and the material conditions of the masses by calling on them to provide, through their direct and conscientious action, for their own futures. Revolution is the organization of all public services by those how work in them in their own interest as well as the public's; Revolution is the destruction of all coercive ties; it is the autonomy of groups, of communes, of regions; Revolution is the free federation brought about by desire for brotherhood, by individual and collective interests, by the needs of production and defense; Revolution is the constitution of innumerable free groupings based on ideas, wishes, and tastes of all kinds that exist among the people; Revolution is the forming and disbanding of thousands of representative, district, communal, regional, national bodies which, without having any legislative power, serve to make known and to coordinate the desires and interests of people near and far and which act through information, advice and example. Revolution is freedom proved in the crucible of facts — and lasts so long as freedom lasts, that is until others, taking advantage of the weariness that overtakes the masses, of the inevitable disappointments that follow exaggerated hopes, of the probable errors and human faults, succeed in constituting a power, which supported by an army of conscripts or mercenaries, lays down the law, arrests the movement at the point it has reached, and then begins the reaction.

The great majority of anarchists, if I am not mistaken, hold the view that human perfectibility and anarchy would not be achieved even in a few thousand years, if first one did not create by the revolution, made by a conscious majority, the necessary environment for freedom and

well being. For this reason we want to make the revolution as soon as possible, and to do so we need to take advantage of all positive forces and every favorable situation which arises.

The task of the conscious minority is to profit from very situation to change the environment in a way that will make possible the education of the whole people.

And since the environment today, which obliges most people to live in misery, is maintained by violence, we advocate and prepare for violence. That is why we are revolutionaries, and not because we are desperate men thirsting for revenge and filled with hate.

We are revolutionaries because we believe that only the revolution, the violent revolution, can solve the ills we face. We believe further-more that the revolution is an act of will — the will of individuals and of the masses; that it needs for its success certain objective conditions, but that does not happen of necessity, inevitably, through the single action of economic and political forces.

Our task is to be revolutionary not only in the philosophical meaning of the word but also in the popular and insurrectionalist sense; and I can say this to clearly distinguish between my views and those of others who call themselves revolutionaries, but who interpret the world so as not to have to bring in the face of violence, the insurrection which must open the way to revolutionary achievements.

Anarchy cannot be achieved until after the revolution which will sweep away the first material obstacles. It is clear then that our efforts must in the first instance be directed to making the revolution and in such a way that it is in the direction of anarchy. We have to provoke the revolution with all the means at our disposal and act in it as anarchists, by opposing the constitution of any authoritarian regime and putting into operation as much as we can of our program. Anarchists will have to take advantage of the increased freedom that we would have won. We will have to be morally and technically prepared to realize within the limits of our numbers, those forms of social life and cooperation which they consider best and most suitable for paving the way for the future.

We do not want to wait for the masses to become anarchist before making the revolution, since we are convinced that they will never become anarchist if the institutions which keep them enslaved are not first destroyed. And since we need the support of the masses to build up a force of sufficient strength and to achieve our specific task of radical change of society by the direct action of the masses, we must get closer to them, accept them as they are, and from within their ranks seek to push them forward as much as possible. That is of course, if we really intend to work for the practical achievement of our ideals, and are not

content with preaching in the desert for the simple satisfaction of our intellectual pride.

We don't take revolution as synonymous with progress, with an historic view of life. I that sense all kinds of people are revolutionary. When one introduced the centuries into the argument, everyone will agree with everything he says. But when we speak of revolution, when the masses speak of revolution, as when one refers to it in history, one simply means the insurrection triumphant. Insurrections will be necessary as long as there are power groups which use their material force to exact obedience from the masses. And it is only too clear that there will be many more insurrections before the people win that minimum of indispensable conditions for free and peaceful development, when humanity will be able to advance towards its noblest objectives without cruel struggles and useless suffering.

By revolution we do not mean jus the insurrection, but we must avoid replacing one state of coercion by another. We must clearly distinguish between the revolutionary act which destroys as much as it can of the old regime and puts in its place new institutions, and government which comes afterwards to halt the revolution and suppress as many of the revolutionary conquests as it can.

History teaches us that all advances that are the result of revolutions were secured in the period of popular enthusiasm, when either a recognized government did not exist or was too weak to make a stand against the revolution. But once the government was formed, so reaction started which served the interest of the old and the new privileged classes and took back from the people all that it could.

Our task then is to make, and to help others make, the revolution by taking advantage of every opportunity and all available forces: advancing the revolution as much as possible in its constructive as well as destructive role, and always remaining opposed to the formation of any government, either ignoring it or combating it to the limits of our capacities.

We will no more recognize as republican constitution than we would a parliamentary monarchy. We cannot stop it if the people want it; we might even occasionally be with them in fighting attempts to bring about a restoration of a monarchy; but we will want and will demand complete freedom for those who think as we do and who wish to live outside the tutelage and oppression of the government; to propagate their ideas by word and deed. Revolutionaries yes, but above all anarchists.

1. Destruction of all concentrations of political power is the first duty of oppressed people.
2. Any organization of an allegedly provisional revolutionary political power to achieve this destruction cannot be other than one trick more, and would be as dangerous to the people as are all present governments.
3. In refusing every compromise for the achievement of the revolution, workers of the world must establish solidarity in revolutionary action outside the framework of bourgeois politicians.

These anarchist principles which were formulated under the inspiration of Bakunin at the Congress of St. Imier, 1872, continue to point a good direction for us today. Those who have tried to act in contradiction to them have disappeared, because however defined, government, dictatorship and parliament can only lead the people back to slavery. All experience so far bears this out. Needless to say, for the delegates of St. Imier as for us and all anarchists, the abolition of political power is not possible without the simultaneous destruction of economic privilege.

There is a need for a revolution to eliminate the material forces which exist to defend privilege and to prevent every real social progress. This conviction has led many to believe that the only important thing is the insurrection, and to overlook what has to be done to prevent an insurrection from remaining a sterile act of violence against which an act of reactionary violence would be the eventual reply. For those who believe this, all fo the practical questions of organization, of how to make provisions for the distribution of food, are idle questions: for them these are matters which will solve themselves, or will be solved by those who come after us. Yet the conclusion we come to is this: Social reorganization is something we must all think about right now, and as the old is destroyed we shall have a more human and just society as well as one more receptive to future advances. The alternative is that “the leaders” will think about these problems, and we shall have a new government, which will do exactly as all previous governments have done, in making the people pay for the scant and poor services they render, by taking away their freedom and allowing them to be oppressed by every kind of parasite and exploiter.

In order to abolish the police and all the harmful social institutions we must know what to put in their place, no in a more or less distant future but immediately, the very day we start demolishing. One only destroys, effectively and permanently, that which one replaces by something else; and to put off to a later date the solution of problems which present

themselves with the urgency of necessity, would be to give time to the institutions one is intending to abolish to recover from the shock and reassert themselves, perhaps under other names, but certainly with the same structure.

Our solutions may be accepted by a sufficiently large section of the population and we shall have achieved anarchy, or taken a step towards anarchy; or they may not be understood or accepted and then our efforts will serve as propaganda and place before the public at large the program for a not distant future. But in any case we must have our solutions provisional, subject to correction and revision in the light of practice, but we must have our solutions if we do not wish to submit passively to those solutions imposed by others, and limit ourselves to the unprofitable role of useless and impotent grumblers.

I believe that we anarchists, convinced of the validity of our program, must make special efforts to acquire a predominating influence in order to be able to swing the movement towards the realization of our ideals; but we must acquire this influence by being more active and more effective than the others. Only in this way will it be worth acquiring. Today we must examine thoroughly, develop and propagate our ideas and coordinate our efforts for common action. We must act inside the popular movements to prevent them from limiting themselves to, and being corrupted by, the exclusive demand for the small improvements possible under the capitalist system, and seek to make it seve for the preparation o the complete and radical change of our society. We must work among the mass of unorganized, and possibly unorganizable, people to awaken in them the spirit of revolt and the desire and hope for a free and happy existence, We must initiate and support every possible kind of movement which tends to weaken the power of the government and of the capitalists and to raise the moral level and material conditions of the people. We must get ready and prepare, morally and materially, for the revolutionary act which has to open the way to the future.

And tomorrow, in the revolution, we must play an active part in the necessary physical struggle, seeking to make it as radical as possible, in order to destroy all the repressive forces of the government and to induce the people to take possession of the land, homes, transport, factories, mines, and of all existing goods, and organize themselves so that there is a just distribution immediately of food products. At the same time we must arrange for the exchange of goods between communities and regions and continue to intensify production and all those services which are of use to the people.

We must, in every way possible, and in accord with local conditions and possibilities, encourage action by associations, cooperatives, groups

of volunteers — in order to prevent the emergence of new authoritarian groups, new governments, combating them with violence if necessary, but above all by rendering them useless.

And if there were not sufficient support among the people to prevent the reconstitution of government, its authoritarian institutions and its organs of repression, we should refuse to cooperate of recognize it, and rebel against its demands, claiming full autonomy for ourselves and for all dissident minorities. We should remain in a state of open rebellion if possible, and prepare the way to convert present defeat into a future success.

I do no think that what matters is the triumph of our plans, our projects and our utopias, which in any case will need the confirmation of practice and experiment, and may as a result have to be modified, developed or adapted to the true moral and material conditions of time and place. What matters most of all is that the people, all people, should lose their sheep like instincts and habits with which their minds have been inculcated by an age-long slavery, and that they should learn to think and act freely. It is to this task of liberation that anarchists must devote their attention.

Once the government has been overthrown, or at least neutralized, it will be the task of the people, and especially of those among them who have initiative and organizing ability, to provide for the satisfaction of immediate needs and to prepare for the future by destroying privileges and harmful institutions and in the meantime seeing to it that those useful institutions which today serve the ruling class either exclusively or primarily, shall operate in favor of all equally.

Anarchists have the job of being the militant custodians of liberty against all aspirants to power and against the possible tyranny of the majority.

We are agreed in thinking that apart from the problem of assuring victory against the material forces of he adversary there is also the problem of giving life to the revolution after victory.

We are in agreement that a revolution which were to result in chaos would not be a vital revolution.

But one must not exaggerate, it should not be thought that we must, and can find a perfect solution for every possible problem. One should not want to foresee and determine too much, because instead of preparing for anarchy we might find ourselves indulging in unattainable dreams or ever becoming authoritarians, and consciously or otherwise, proposing to act like a government which in the name of freedom and the popular will subject people to its domination. The fact is that one cannot educate the people if they are not in a position, or obliged by

necessity, to act for themselves, and that the revolutionary organization the people, useful and necessary as it is, cannot be stretched indefinitely: at a certain point if it does not erupt in revolutionary action, either the government strangles it or the organization itself degenerates and breaks up — and one has to start all over again from the beginning.

I would be unable to accept the view that all past revolutions though they were not anarchist revolutions were useless, nor that future ones which will still not be anarchist revolutions will be useless. I believe that the complete triumph of anarchy will come by evolution, gradually, rather than by violent revolution: when an earlier or several earlier revolutions will have destroyed the major military and economic obstacles which are opposed to the spiritual and material development of the people, and which are opposed to increasing production to the level of needs and desires.

In any case, if we take into account our sparse numbers and the prevalent attitude among most people, and if we do not wish to confuse our wishes with reality, we must expect that the next revolution will not be anarchist one, and therefore what is more pressing, is to think of what we can and must do in a revolution in which we will be a relatively small and badly armed minority. But we must beware of ourselves becoming less anarchist merely because he people are not ready for anarchy. If they want a government, it is unlikely that we will be able to prevent a new government being formed, but this is no reason for our not trying to persuade the people that government is useless and harmful or of preventing the government from also imposing on us and others like us who don't want it. We will have to exert ourselves to ensure that social life and especially economic standards improve without the intervention of government, and thus we must be as ready as possible to deal with the practical problems of production and distribution, remembering that those most suited to organize work are those who now do it. If we are unable to prevent the constitution of a new government, if we are unable to destroy it immediately, we should in either case refuse to support it in any shape or form. We should reject military conscription and refuse to pay taxes. Disobedience on principle, resistance to the bitter end against every imposition by the authorities, and an absolute refusal to accept any position of command.

If we are unable to overthrow capitalism, we shall have to demand for ourselves and for all who want it, the right of free access to the necessary means of production to maintain an independent existence.

Advise when we have suggestions to offer; teach if we know more than others; set the example for a life based on free agreement between men;

defend even with force if necessary and possible, our autonomy against any government provocation... but command, govern or rule — *never!*

In this way we shall not achieve anarchy, which cannot be imposed against the will of the people, but at least we shall be preparing the way for it. We do not have to wait indefinitely for the state to wither away or for our rulers to become part of the people and to give up their power over us if we can talk them out of their position.

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Reformism

Errico Malatesta

The fundamental error of the reformists is that of dreaming of solidarity, a sincere collaboration, between masters and servants, between proprietors and workers which even if it might have existed here and there in periods of profound unconsciousness of the masses and of ingenuous faith in religion and rewards, is utterly impossible today.

Those who envisage a society of well stuffed pigs which waddle contentedly under the ferule of a small number of swineherd; who do not take into account the need for freedom and the sentiment of human dignity; who really believe in a God that orders, for his abstruse ends, the poor to be submissive and the rich to be good and charitable — can also imagine and aspire to a technical organisation of production which assures abundance to all and is at the same time materially advantageous both to the bosses and to the workers. But in reality "social peace" based on abundance for all will remain a dream, so long as society is divided into antogonistic classes, that is employers and employees. And there will be neither peace nor abundance.

The antogonism is spiritual rather than material. There will never be a sincere understanding between bosses and workers for the better exploitation of the forces of nature in the interests of mankind, because the bosses above all want to remain bosses and secure always more power at the expense of the workers, as well as by competition with other bosses, whereas the workers have had their fill of bosses and don't want more!

[Our good friends] are wasting their time when they tell us that a little freedom is better than a brutal and unbridled tyranny; that n reasonable working day, a wage that allows people to live better than animals, and protection of women and children, are preferable to the exploitation of human labour to the point of human exhaustion; or that the State school, bad as it is, is always better, from the point of view of the child's moral development, than schools run by priests and monks ... for we are in

complete agreement. And we also agree that there may be circumstances in which the Election results, national or local, can have good or bad consequences and that this vote might be determined by the anarchists' votes if the strength of the rival parties were equally balanced.

In most cases it is an illusion; when elections are tolerably free, the only value they have is symbolic: they indicate the state of public opinion, which would have imposed itself by more efficacious means, and with more far reaching results, if it had not been offered the outlet of elections. But no matter; even if some minor advances were the direct result of an electoral victory, anarchists should not flock to the polling booths or cease to preach their methods of struggle.

Since no one can do everything in this world, one must choose one's own line of conduct.

There is always an element of contradiction between minor improvements, the satisfaction of immediate needs and the struggle for a society which is really better than the existing one. Those who want to devote themselves to the erection of public lavatories and drinking fountains where there is a need for them, or who use their energies for the construction of a road, or the establishment of a municipal school, or for the passing of some minor law to protect workers or to get rid of a brutal policeman, do well, perhaps, to use the ballot paper in favour of this or that influential personage. But then — since one wants to be "practical" one must go the whole hog — so, rather than wait for the victory of the opposition party, rather than vote for the more kindred party, it is worth taking a short cut and support the dominant party, and serve the government already in office, and become the agent of the Prefect or the Mayor. And in fact the neo-converts we have in mind did not in fact propose voting for the most "progressive" party, but for the one that had the greater chance of being elected . . But in that case where does it all end? ...

In the course of human history it is generally the case that the malcontents, the oppressed, and the rebels, before being able to conceive and desire a radical change in the political and social institutions, restrict their demands to partial changes, to concessions by the rulers, and to improvements. Hopes of obtaining reforms as well as in their efficacy, precede the conviction that in order to destroy the power of a government or of a class, it is necessary to deny the reasons for that power, and therefore to make a revolution.

In the order of things, reforms are then introduced or they are not, and once introduced either consolidate the existing regime or undermine it; assist the advent of revolution or hamper it and benefit or harm progress in general, depending on their specific characteristic, the spirit in which

they have been granted, and above all, the spirit in which they are asked for, claimed or seized by the people.

Governments and the privileged classes are naturally always guided by instincts of self preservation, of consolidation and the development of their powers and privileges; and when they consent to reforms it is either because they consider that they will serve their ends or because they do not feel strong enough to resist, and give in, fearing what might otherwise be a worse alternative.

The oppressed, either ask for and welcome improvements as a benefit graciously conceded, recognise the legitimacy of the power which is over them, and so do more harm than good by helping to slow down, or divert and perhaps even stop the processes of emancipation. Or instead they demand and impose improvements by their action, and welcome them as partial victories over the class enemy, using them as a spur to greater achievements, and thus they are a valid help and a preparation to the total overthrow of privilege, that is, for the revolution. A point is reached when the demands of the dominated class cannot be acceded to by the ruling class without compromising their power. Then the violent conflict inevitably occurs.

It is not true to say therefore, that revolutionaries are systematically opposed to improvements, to reforms. They oppose the reformists on the one hand because their methods are less effective for securing reforms from governments and employers, who only give in through fear, and on the other hand because very often the reforms they prefer are those which not only bring doubtful immediate benefits, but also serve to consolidate the existing regime and to give the workers a vested interest in its continued existence. Thus, for instance, State pensions, insurance schemes, as well as profit sharing schemes in agricultural and industrial enterprises, etc.

Apart from the unpleasantness of the word which has been abused and discredited by politicians, anarchism has always been, and can never be anything but, reformist. We prefer to say reformative in order to avoid any possible confusion with those who are officially classified as "reformists" and seek by means of small and often ephemeral improvements to make the present system more bearable (and as a result help to consolidate it); or who instead believe in good faith that it is possible to eliminate the existing social evils by recognising and respecting, in practice if not in theory, the basic political and economic institutions which are the cause of as well as the prop that supports these evils. But in any case it is always a question of reforms, and the essential difference lies in the kind of reform one wants and the way one thinks of being able to achieve it. Revolution means, in the historical sense of the word,

the radical reform of institutions, achieved rapidly by the violent insurrection of the people against existing power and privileges; and we are revolutionaries and insurrectionists because we do not just want to improve existing institutions but to destroy them completely, abolishing every form of domination by man over man, and every kind of parasitism on human labour; and because we want to achieve this as quickly as possible, and because we believe that institutions born of violence are maintained by violence and will not give way except to an equivalent violence. But the revolution cannot be made just when one likes. Should we remain inactive, waiting for the situation to mature with time?

And even after a successful insurrection, could we over night realise all our desires and pass from a governmental and capitalist hell to a libertarian-communist heaven which is the complete freedom of man within the wished for community of interests with all men?

These are illusions which can take root among authoritarians who look upon the masses as the raw material which those who have power can, by decrees, supported by bullets and handcuffs, mold to their will. But these illusions have not taken among anarchists. We need the people's consensus, and therefore we must persuade by means of propaganda and example, we must educate and seek to change the environment in such a way that this education may reach an ever increasing number of people...

We are reformers today in so far as we seek to create the most favourable conditions and as large a body of enlightened militants so that an insurrection by the people would be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. We shall be reformers tomorrow, after a triumphant insurrection, and the achievement of freedom, in that we will seek with all the means that freedom permits, that is by propaganda, example and even violent resistance against anyone who should wish to restrict our freedom in order to win over to our ideas an ever greater number of people.

But we will never recognise the institutions; we will take or win all possible reforms with the same spirit that one tears occupied territory from the enemy's grasp in order to go on advancing, and we will always remain enemies of every government, whether it be that of the monarchy today, or the republican or bolshevik governments of tomorrow.

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From Malatesta: Life and Ideas, Verne Richards' ed., London, Freedom Press, 1965

Anarchist Propaganda

Errico Malatesta

Anarchist Propaganda

It must be admitted that we anarchists, in outlining what we would like the future society to be a society without bosses and without gendarmes have, in general, made everything look a bit too easy.

While on the one hand we reproach our adversaries for being unable to think beyond present conditions and of finding communism and anarchy unattainable, because they imagine that man must remain as he is today, with all his meanness, his vices and his fears, even when their causes have been eliminated, on the other hand we skate over the difficulties and the doubts, assuming that the morally positive effects which will result from the abolition of economic privilege and the triumph of liberty have already been achieved.

So, when we are told that some people won't want to work, we immediately have a string of excellent reasons to show that work, that is the exercise of our faculties and the pleasure to produce, is at the root of man's well-being, and that it is therefore ridiculous to think that healthy people would wish to withdraw from the need to produce for the community when work would not be oppressive, exploited and despised, as it is today.

And if they bring up the inclinations to, or the anti-social, criminal ways of, a section, however small, of the population, we reply that, except in rare and questionable cases of congenital sickness which it is the task of alienists to deal with, crimes are of social origin and would change with a change of institutions.

Perhaps this exaggerated optimism, this simplification of the problems had its *raison d'etre* when anarchism was a beautiful dream, a hurried anticipation, and what was needed was to push forward to the highest ideal and inspire enthusiasm by stressing the contrast between the present hell and the desired paradise of tomorrow.

But times have changed. Statal and capitalist society is in a state of crisis, of dissolution or reconstruction depending on whether revolutionaries are able, and know how, to influence with their concepts and their strength, and perhaps we are on the eve of the first attempts at realization.

It is necessary therefore to leave a little on one side the idyllic descriptions and visions of future and distant perfection and face things as they are today and as they will be in what one can assume to be the foreseeable future. When anarchist ideas were a novelty which amazed and shocked, and it was only possible to make propaganda for a distant future (and even the attempts at insurrection, and the prosecutions we

freely invited and accepted, only served the purpose of drawing the public's attention to our propaganda), it could be enough to criticize existing society and present an exposition of the ideal to which we aspire. Even the questions of tactics were, in fact, simply questions of deciding which were the best ways of propagating one's ideas and preparing individuals and masses for the desired social transformation.

But today the situation is more mature, circumstances have changed … and we must be able to show not only that we have more reason on our side than have the parties because of the nobility of our ideal of freedom, but also that our ideas and methods are the most practical for the achievement of the greatest measure of freedom and well-being that is possible in the present state of our civilization. Our task is that of "pushing" the people to demand and to seize all the freedom they can and to make themselves responsible for providing their own needs without waiting for orders from any kind of authority. Our task is that of demonstrating the uselessness and harmfulness of government, provoking and encouraging by propaganda and action, all kinds of individual and collective initiatives.

It is in fact a question of education for freedom, of making people who are accustomed to obedience and passivity consciously aware of their real power and capabilities. One must encourage people to do things for themselves, or to think they are doing so by their own initiative and inspiration even when in fact their actions have been suggested by others, just as the good school teacher when he sets a problem his pupil cannot solve immediately, helps him in such a way that the pupil imagines that he has found the solution unaided, thus acquiring courage and confidence in his own abilities.

This is what we should do in our propaganda. If our critic has ever made propaganda among those who we, with too much disdain, call politically "unconscious," it will have occurred to him to find himself making an effort not to appear to be expounding and forcing on them a well-known and universally accepted truth; he will have tried to stimulate their thought and get them to arrive with their own reason at conclusions which he could have served up ready-made, much more easily so far as he was concerned, but with less profit for the "beginner" in politics. And if he ever found himself in a position of having to act as leader or teacher in some action or in propaganda, when the others were passive he would have tried to avoid making the situation obvious so as to stimulate them to think, to take the initiative and gain confidence in themselves.

The daily paper *Umanità Nova* is but one of our means of action. If instead of awakening new forces, and encouraging more ambitions and

enthusiastic activity, it were to absorb all our forces and stifle all other initiatives, it would be a misfortune rather than an affirmation of vigor, and witness to our strength, vitality and boldness. Furthermore there are activities which cannot by definition, by carried out by the paper or by the press. Since the paper has to address itself to the public it must of necessity speak in the presence of the enemy, and there are situations in which the enemy must not be informed. The comrades must make other arrangements for these situations ... elsewhere!

Must organization be secret or public?

In general terms the answer is obviously that one must carry out in public what it is convenient that everybody should know and in secret what it is agreed should be withheld from the public at large.

It is obvious that for us who carry on our propaganda to raise the moral level of the masses and induce them to win their emancipation by their own efforts and who have no personal or sectarian ambitions to dominate, it is an advantage where possible to give our activities a maximum of publicity to thereby reach and influence with our propaganda as many people as we can.

But this does not depend only on our wishes; it is clear that if, for example, a government were to prohibit us from speaking, publishing, or meeting and we had not the strength openly defy the ban, we should seek to do all these things clandestinely.

One must, however, always aim to act in the full light of day, and struggle to win our freedoms, bearing in mind that the best way to obtain a freedom is that of taking it, facing necessary risks; whereas very often a freedom is lost, through one's own fault, either through not exercising it or using it timidly, giving the impression that one has not the right to be doing what one is doing.

Therefore, as a general rule we prefer always to act publicly ... also because the revolutionaries of today have qualities, some good and others bad, which reduce their conspiratorial capacities in which the revolutionaries of fifty or a hundred years ago excelled. But certainly there can be circumstances and actions which demand secrecy, and in which case one must act accordingly.

In any case, let us be wary of those "secret" affairs which everybody knows about, and first among them, the police.

Isolated, sporadic propaganda which is often a way of easing a troubled conscience or is simply an outlet for someone who has a passion for

argument, serves little or no purpose. In the conditions of unawareness and misery in which the masses live, and with so many forces against us, such propaganda is forgotten and lost before its effect can grow and bear fruit. The soil is too ungrateful for seeds sown haphazardly to germinate and make roots.

What is needed is continuity of effort, patience, coordination and adaptability to different surroundings and circumstances.

Each one of us must be able to count on the cooperation of everybody else; and that wherever a seed is sown it will not lack the loving care of the cultivator, who tends it and protects it until it has become a plant capable of looking after itself, and in its turn, of sowing new, fruitful, seeds.

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Collection of writings of various dates from Verne Richards (ed.),
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